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Introduction

(By CubeJackal)

A clear sky presided over the dwarven capital, its black expanse broken only by a crescent moon and its entourage of winking stars. Below, all of the mountainhome's inhabitants slept a sound sleep. All, that is, except a certain couple within the queen's keep...

"You know what this means, general," began Queen Brasswords. The young queen, though only recently having inherited her mother's throne, was already famed for living up to her name by being very vocal about whatever happened to displease her. Her servants unanimously agreed that her bark was worse than her bite - though her bite wasn't anything to take lightly either. With a pointed glance at another individual sat at the table - presumably the general she was referring to - she continued. "This is the third security failure under your command in as many years. Your constant failings are becoming a difficult stone to swallow." The queen brought the stone tablet in her hands down onto the table heavily and the resultant clatter reverberated around the room. General Earthgrowl, the object of his liege's ire, cleared his throat and began making excuses.

"Your Majesty, this isn't my fault alone, I assure you--"

"Silence, elf-wit! Do you know how many of our society's lowest scum escaped into the tunnels yesterday?"

The general adjusted his collar before opening his mouth, clearly anxious despite his professional exterior. "Fifty-seven, your Majesty. Ten have already been re-apprehended and we're on the trail of four others already." The queen continued to glare icily at the general as he attempted to excuse himself and for a while after he finished speaking. Realising that she was expecting him to say more, Earthgrowl cleared his throat again and carried on. "Your Majesty, you must understand the state of our penal system. Today's jail break was the result of overcrowding, through and through. Our society's... failures, if you will, are becoming too numerous for our single prison complex." Queen Brasswords seemed to relax slightly in her chair, her thoughts now less directed on punishing the general's error and more on fixing the cause. Warily, Earthgrowl also allowed himself to lean into his seat. "We can't construct another complex here. Our labour is tied up elsewhere and we can hardly afford to lose progress on other projects," the queen muttered, not facing her subordinate as she spoke. Her fingers formed a pyramid upon the table and flexed as she racked her brain for solutions. "Hmm... perhaps... ah!" Her head shot up from its slouched position as an idea struck her. General Earthgrowl glanced up too, hoping that the queen's flash of inspiration hadn't been some kind of cruel and unusual punishment. "I know exactly how we can get rid of these miscreants overcrowding the cells and add to the national coffers while we're at it. Listen, general, for this will involve you quite intimately..."

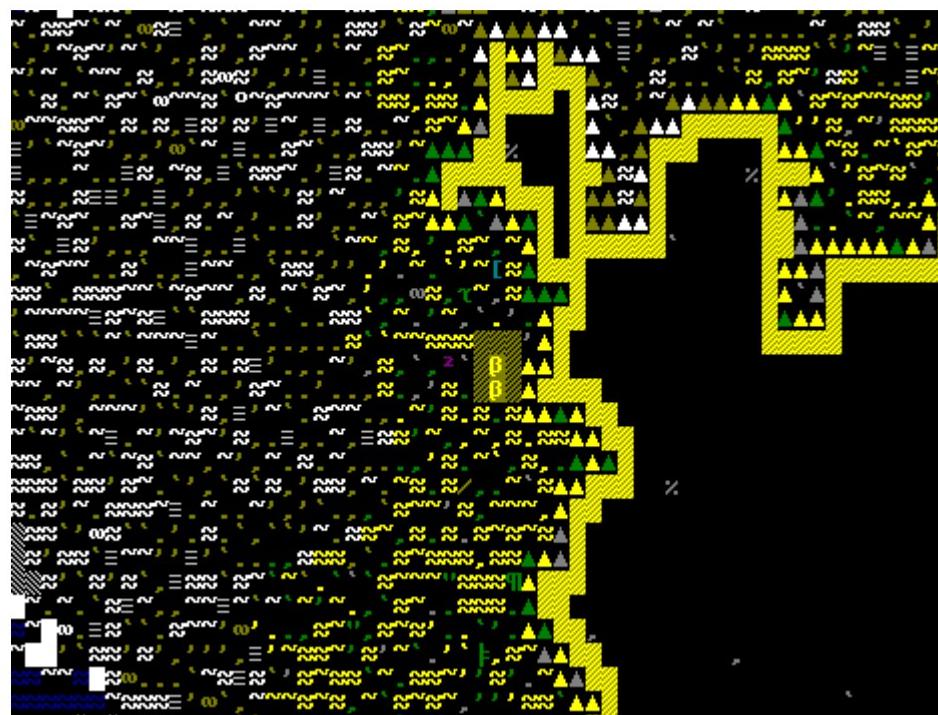
"Stand up! Back in line, rat-brain! No slouching!" The macedwarf guard's barked orders carried loud and clear across the assembled group of inmates. In response, each of the imprisoned dwarves reluctantly straightened up and stood to attention. Each had been hand-selected by General Earthgrowl himself for their brute strength, special skills and willingness to obey orders. Their number totalled six - six of the meanest, toughest and most intelligent criminals the mountainhome had to offer. "You'll be pleased to hear that you're about to be set free from the city jail! This does not mean, however, that you will be free outright, so don't start running yet, you filthy miscreants!" Each prisoner listened silently to the shouting guard, well-used by now to taking the abuse on the chin. "You lucky six have been chosen by the queen's general himself to strike the earth at Steelhold - our first and soon-to-be-finest penal colony!" Surprised and curious murmurs immediately cropped up around the group, but were silenced by a single stamp from the macedwarf's iron boot. "Rest assured that you won't be running free - I, your new overseer, will be making sure of that! The work will be tough! There will be few breaks and fewer luxuries! Before long, you'll wish you could come crawling back to your comfy little cell... but you can't! This is a one-way trip, ingrates! Pack your damn bags and report here at noon or I'll personally bring you out and drag you behind the wagon the whole damn way! Dismissed!"

Almost immediately, the criminal dwarves shuffled back to the main cell area, chatting amongst themselves along the way. Most of them agreed that their new overseer wouldn't go easily on them. Known by the name of Thronesteel to his fellow guards, 'Jackal' to his friends and just 'Sir' to the prisoners in his charge, the experienced macedwarf was a former militia captain and knew his way around a good few weapons besides his trusty mace - some of which he was glad to use on misbehaving inmates. His military background showed clearly in his harsh dealings with the inmates and he certainly wished to be feared, not loved. Even he, however, had his fears about the motley crew he would take charge over. The warden had warned him of this group of 'pioneers' - each had been chosen by the general himself for either their brute strength, sharp cunning or simple dog-like obedience. He wasn't worried about the strong ones - a skilled man-at-arms, Jackal could easily handle an unarmed brute. It was the smart ones he wanted to keep a beady dwarven eye on. However, he'd have time to press these pioneering inmates into following his will while on the journey to the site. For now, he busied himself prepping the wagon train and loading supplies. Things would be much, much harder on the inmates than on him - he was sure of that...

Turn 1: CubeJackal

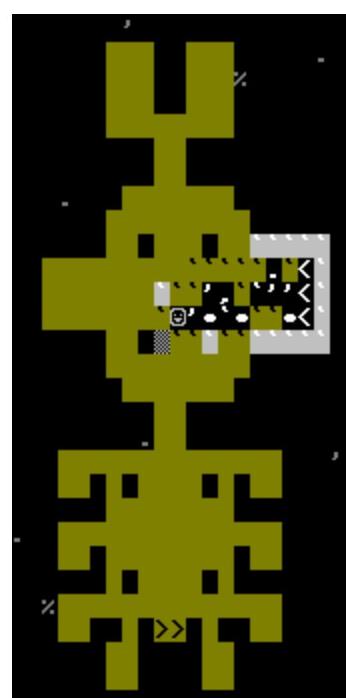
This is a finely-crafted yak leather journal. Sewn onto the journal is an image of a dwarf and a cage. The dwarf is making a submissive gesture. Inscribed onto the journal are the words 'Journal of 'Jackal' Thronesteel'. The journal is filled with entries and sketches, though none of them are dated.

Damn these flies. They're everywhere in these cursed badlands. Thank Ducim that we're almost at the site - though I hardly expect it to be any cooler or more comfortable than our current position. Nonetheless, this is a fitting place to construct a glorified prison. Perhaps I should order the work area to be constructed above ground, in the full glare of the sun's rays... no, that would be simple torture. I rapidly tire of spending long hours without a roof over my head myself and am even beginning to envy those prisoners, who despite being chained and cramped, at least get the virtue of a covered carriage. They should enjoy their sedentary journey while they still can. A quick jaunt along the coast early tomorrow will see us at the site before noon. That's when the real work will begin.



A crude sketch of waves lapping against a smooth desert coastline, upon which a wagon stands.

At last, we have arrived. I've unhitched the horses and tasked the prisoners to start breaking the sand while I watch and write this entry. Modi has taken to chopping the scant few trees in the area while those two miners whose names I didn't catch immediately started digging a hole. I've already planned out their work - a main cell area, foyer and the start of the labour wing are all that will be needed for now. I must remember to keep an eye on those miners - having read the records of one of them, I certainly don't want a repeat offence of this particular kind.



A top-down sketch of a room plan and a few corridors, as well as a doodle of a dwarf pouring liquid onto another. The second dwarf is burning.

I must face the facts, journal - I failed in my mission even before we struck the earth. Guards and prisoners must never form close relationships, obviously to avoid bias and other such consequences. However, that drunken fling back in the Slopes of Pondering... she remembers, and she knows I remember. I have no idea why my feelings have persisted for a likely-psychopathic inmate of the queen's justice system, but of one thing is for sure, it is that Modi may now be more trouble than a little stress relief a few weeks back was worth.

Relationships of the Warden 'Jackal' Kalurdeler

'Modi' Kunled, Cutter

Lover

A scribbled-out doodle of Modi, the former soldier and current woodworker.



A few sketches of annotated room plans, with labels reading things like 'smelter' and 'tables'.

Work proceeds as planned. I have every dwarf with a tool doing some kind of labour and they are merrily breaking their backs constructing our new cafeteria. Our carpentry and masonry industries are up and running and a forge is on the cards. Otherwise, nothing noteworthy to report.

That miner, FireCrazy, had an altercation with the one known as Shadow today. I'm not entirely sure of the exact details, but I'm aware that heated words were exchanged and although the incident didn't come to blows before I broke it up, I'm sure that it was simply because neither wished to be the one to blame. I'll have to keep an eye on both of them - both for Shadow's behaviour and FireCrazy's safety. I'm well aware of how that former bandit tended to deal with those he disliked back in the capital.



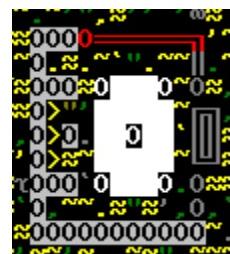
I saw in the new batch of inmates today. None stuck out especially, though I found it bizarre that two young children were amongst those to be interred. I'd prefer to think that they are simply being moved with their families rather than being sent here as prisoners, though having seen the streets of the capital lately... I won't ask too many questions. Sarrak, our butcher, seems to have taken a liking to the younger ones. This presents a significant safety concern, obviously.

By the way, it's summer. I could tell because my helmet almost melted to my skull when I went outside to set up the plans for our exterior walls.

Created Wealth:	Population:	15
You need a broker with the appraisal skill.	Miners	∅ 2
	Woodworkers	∅ 1
	Stoneworkers	∅ None
	Rangers	∅ 4
	Metalsmiths	∅ None
	Jewelers	∅ None
	Craftsdwarves	∅ 1
	Nobles/Admins	∅ None
	Peasants	∅ None
	Dwarven Children	∅ 2
	Fishery Workers	∅ 2
Food Stores:	Farmers	∅ 3
Meat 70?	Engineers	∅ None
Fish 20?	Trained Animals	A None
Plant None	Other Animals	A 2

A page of the journal is occupied with numbers and labels and a few basic calculations. The entry begins on the opposite page.

Bad news. We're running low on the old booze stocks. We've got a brewery up, but all we're waiting for now is the plump helmet farms. I assigned Rock-Eyes to growing duty but haven't heard back from her regarding the progress of the plants she's been tending. To be fair, I haven't heard much from her at all since I first shoved her into the transport wagon. Must be the silent, brooding type.



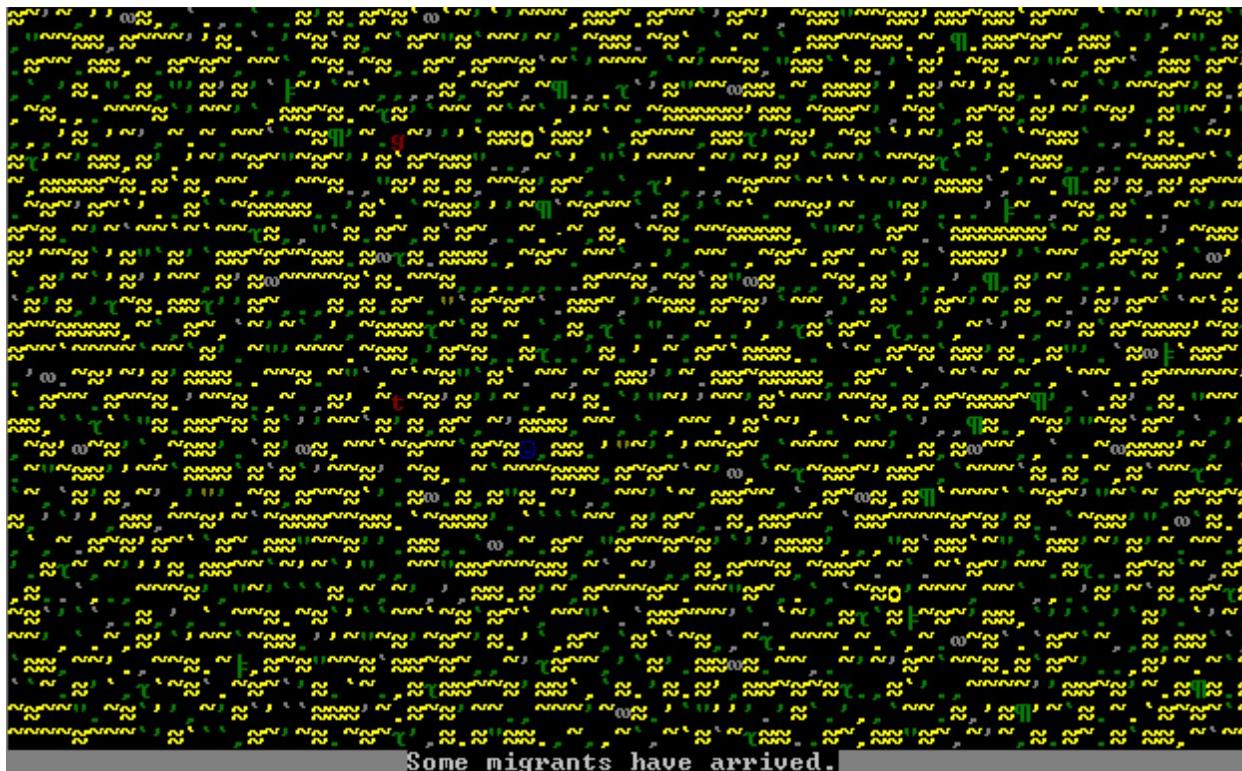
A rushed sketch of a square-ish rock palisade and an iron gate, as well as a depot in the centre.

Me and one of the mason inmates went out early today (to go out at midday likely would have caused us to evaporate then and there) to plan the colony's exterior wall. I'm surprised nobody's done a runner so far - even our hunters Shadow and Rock-Eyes, who've been given a generous level of autonomy, have dutifully returned each night with their day's haul of meat. Perhaps they understand that to attempt to escape in this burning weather and in this season would see their bones picked clean by buzzards before anybody realised their disappearance.



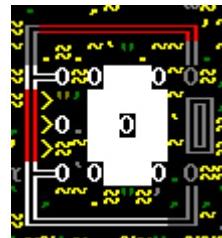
A quick sketch of dwarves mining.

Today was the day that the true labour began. I had our metalsmith forge us a few picks and set the idle inmates to work digging a hole to nowhere, while Modi carved out a few beds for the cells of our newer inmates. Everybody has a job to do - even I've taken to chiselling things out of stone after lights-out (mostly pots to hold our fledgling booze industry's products). This place is already shaping up to be a model penal colony.



A short roster of a few new inmates.

Another bout of new blood - no children this time, thankfully. None of them stuck out, except one who I had to tell three times to shut his damn mouth as I searched each of the new inmates. Name of Jovus, he's apparently in for sedition and attempting to incite a riot back in the capital. He's a charismatic sort, for sure, but all this talk of 'the people's state' just doesn't make sense to me. I'll be keeping a close eye on this potential firebrand.



An image of a square plot of land, penned by a wall and a solid iron drawbridge.

Exterior wall was finished today - just as well, since autumn is here and the sun is beginning to cool down. That said, the concept of 'seasons' has become moot in this wasteland. Every day is either 'uncomfortably hot', 'scorching hot' or 'steel-meltingly painful' no matter the season. We'll soon have a supply caravan, no doubt driven by independent traders hungry for the riches produced by an indentured workforce.



A crude doodle of a mace-armed dwarf beating up a kobold.

Seems that our little operation has attracted attention from those thieving little rats they call kobolds. Almost a shame that the vermin trekked this far across a desert just to get introduced to my mace. However, this is obviously just the start. If the kobolds know we're here, then it won't be long before the elves work it out, then the goblins... damn it. We might not have much time.

The outpost liaison Libash Zonûz from Req Nebé'l has arrived.
Winter has arrived on the calendar.

Our supply caravan arrived today, happily enough. It came just before winter was due to start - a standard practice for most independent traders, but utterly meaningless in an area in which the seasons are just dates on a calendar. Nonetheless, I've no doubt that the greedy sods'll still try and gouge as much as they can from us in return for food and vital supplies.

The merchants look pleased with the bone and stone crafts that me and a couple of the inmates have been working on recently - they keep me from going insane from boredom and make us a profit, so what's not to like? I think I saw the one called Sarrak smuggling something fluffy and wriggling back into the colony while the guards weren't looking, but I've no doubt that even if she did, its bones are probably already being cut into more trinkets.

It has started raining.

A messy sketch of rain falling on a stone building. The page is dotted with small spots where it was once wet.

Ducim finally answered my half-hearted prayers and blessed our backwater with a surprising amount of rainfall. Cool sea winds temporarily dominated the exterior and I decided to allow some of the better-behaved prisoners out into the courtyard for a breath of fresh air. I had to send Jovus back in, however, after he took one of the boxes the traders left behind and started delivering a speech atop it. That agitator doesn't know what's good for him. The monarchic system has serviced our nation well for over 250 years - what good could it possibly do us to depose the ruling classes and give all the unwashed peasants their riches?

'Modi' Kunled, Cutter has been possessed!
'Modi' Kunled has claimed a Carpenter's Workshop.

Today's developments were unsettling, to say the least. Modi, the inmate who I'm ashamed to admit I've become fond of, has shut herself away in her workshop after a few days of odd behaviour. Last I saw of her, she was carting logs down to the workbench with the speed of a dwarf possessed. I can only hope that she won't hurt herself or that nothing bad will come of this.



A detailed picture of a luxurious-looking wooden grate.

An odd development has come from Modi's similarly-odd behaviour. She emerged from the workshop just before lights-out holding an elaborate-looking grate and looking as though she had just woken from a long sleep. She stared at the grate in her hands almost quizzically before electing to toss it back on the workbench and head to her cell. Despite the apparently mundane nature of the object, its appearance is almost enchanting. It looks like something the gods themselves dropped from a celestial workshop high above... I'll have to ensure that it doesn't turn up under any inmate's beds. I saw Shadow eyeing it covetously and I wouldn't put it past this band of miscreants to keep up their criminal ways even out here.



A quick sketch of a vicious-looking goblin. The handwriting in this entry seems more rushed than usual.

It's as I feared. Last month's kobolds were just a warning sign of things to come. I had to put down two dangerous-looking goblin infiltrators today after I caught one rifling through the workshops and the other blundered into a group of inmates. They fell rapidly beneath my mace, predictably, but things will get worse from here if any of these snatchers escape with proof of our colony's growing wealth and productivity. I can only hope that those two were the only ones in the group.

A thief has stolen a *platinum bracelet*!

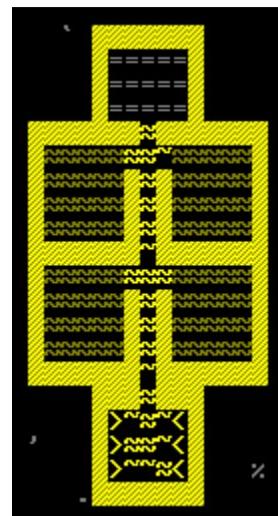
Spring has arrived on the calendar.

Winter has come to an end - this would be cause for celebration in any other mountain fortress, but here it just means that the sun's going to get a little hotter than normal. I may have to cut this entry short, I'm hearing a lot of yelling from the main cell area. I swear, if Shadow and that miner are at it again, I'm going to tear off their beard hair and throw it in the forge.

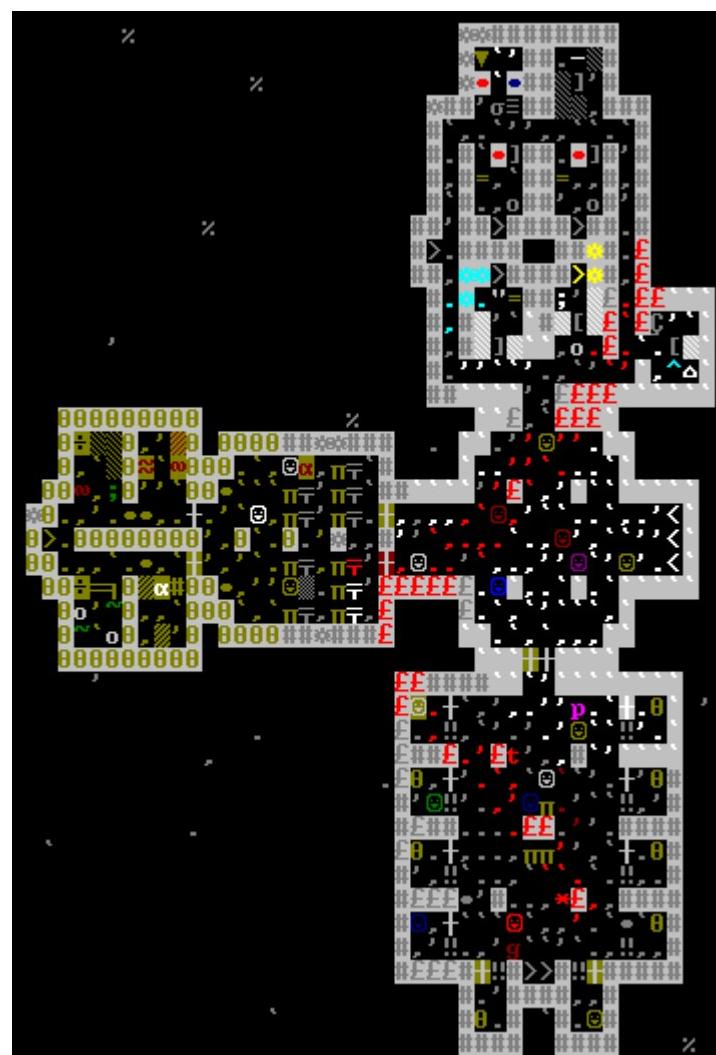
This appears to be the last of the entries, save for a few recent sketches of the colony's floor plan, a rough list of stocks and scant notes on a few notable inmates.



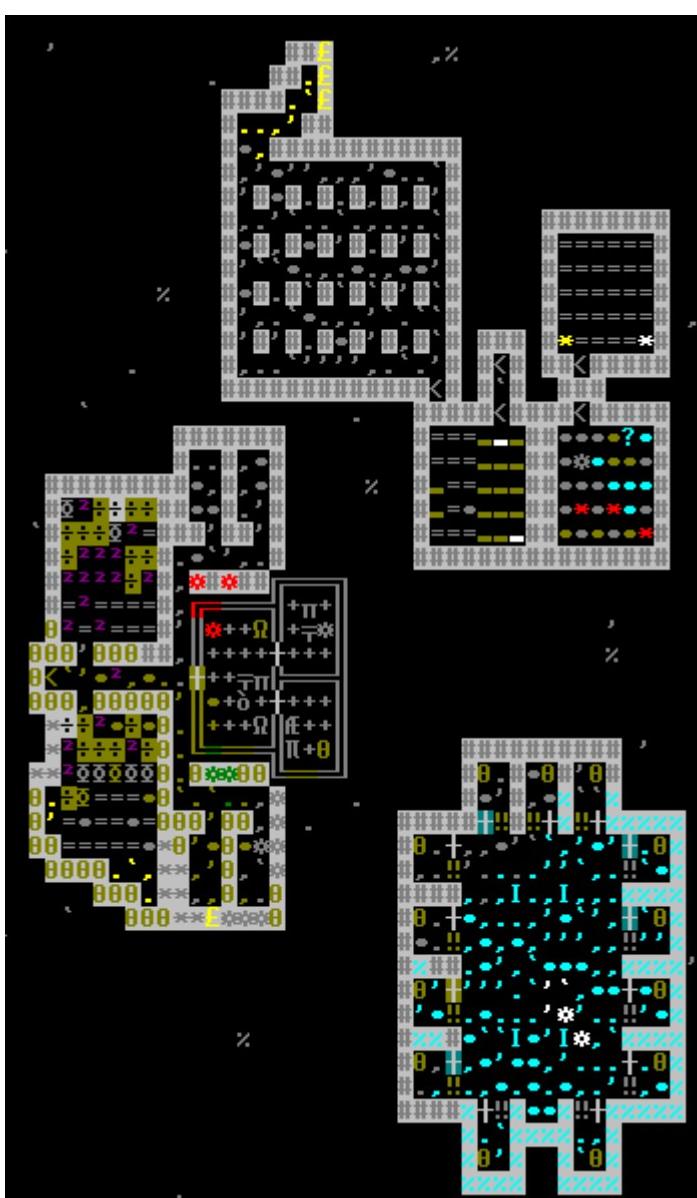
Surface: Exterior walls, trade depot



Floor 1: Farms, seed stockpile



Floor 2: MCA, cafeteria, work area



Floor 3: Guard quarters, cell block 2, stockpiles

Created Wealth:	21900*	Population:	20
Weapons:	660*	Miners	0 4
Armor and Garb:	None	Woodworkers	0 1
Furniture:	8100*	Stoneworkers	0 1
Other Objects:	4590*	Rangers	0 2
Architecture:	4500*	Metalsmiths	0 None
Displayed:	3420*	Jewelers	0 None
Held/Worn:	660*	Craftsdwarves	0 1
Imported Wealth:	16177*	Nobles/Admins	1
Exported Wealth:	3628*	Peasants	0 None
Food Stores:	500?	Dwarven Children	0 2
Meat	200?	Fishery Workers	0 2
Fish	70?	Farmers	0 5
Plant	30?	Engineers	0 1
	Other	Trained Animals	A None
		Other Animals	A 4

Steelhold Stock Roster (New Year)

'Jackal' Kalurdeler has been ecstatic lately. He had a wonderful drink lately. He dined in a very good dining room recently. He admired own fine Container lately. He made a friend recently. He had a truly decadent drink lately. He slept in a very good bedroom recently. He admired a fine Vertical Bars lately. He dined in a good dining room recently. He has been annoyed by flies. He was caught in the rain recently. He has been satisfied at work lately. He took joy in slaughter lately. He talked with a friend lately.

He is romantically involved with 'Modi' Catracks. He is a worshipper of Ducim and a worshipper of Ducim.

He is a citizen of The Gloves of Admiring. He is a member of The Imprisoned Crew. He is an enemy of Thrukudukrarsnis. He is an enemy of The Buff Cruelties. He is the expedition leader of The Imprisoned Crew. He is the militia commander of The Imprisoned Crew. He is the broker of The Imprisoned Crew. He is the former bookkeeper of The Imprisoned Crew. He arrived at Delerkegeth on the 1st of Granite in the year 251.

He is sixty-five years old, born on the 3rd of Timber in the year 187. He is muscular, tall and thin. His eyes are gold. His sideburns are clean-shaven. His very long moustache is neatly combed. His very long beard is arranged in double braids. His short hair is neatly combed. He has a prominent square chin. His nose bridge is convex. His nose is slightly hooked. His skin is sandy taupe.

He is agile, tough and strong.

'Jackal' Kalurdeler likes galena, zinc, red pyrope, deer hoof, trousers and minks for their long bodies. When possible, he prefers to consume bat ray, dwarven ale and mog juice. He absolutely detests slugs.

He has a deep well of patience, a lot of willpower and a very good feel for social relationships, but he has meager creativity and a questionable spatial sense.

He enjoys the company of others. He is incredibly creative. He dislikes intellectual discussions. He is put off by authority and tradition. He is slow to trust others. He dislikes helping others. He finds rules confining. He talks to inanimate objects when there is a lull in the conversation. He needs alcohol to get through the working day. He likes working outdoors and grumbles only mildly at inclement weather.

'FireCrazy' Dolilmedtob has been happy lately. He dined in a fantastic dining room recently. He slept in a good bedroom recently. He has been satisfied at work lately. He was caught in the rain recently. He admired a fine Table lately. He has been annoyed by flies. He talked with a friend lately. He admired own fine Bed lately.

He is a faithful worshipper of Bobrur Fragranceglitter the Bodices of Romancing and a casual worshipper of Osram.

He is a citizen of The Gloves of Admiring. He is a member of The Imprisoned Crew. He arrived at Delerkegeth on the 1st of Granite in the year 251.

He is sixty-nine years old, born on the 19th of Malachite in the year 183.

He is corpulent. His sideburns are clean-shaven. His very long moustache is neatly combed. His very long beard is neatly combed. His very long hair is braided. He has a very narrow square chin. His nose is sharply hooked. His nose bridge is convex. His gold eyes are slightly wide-set. His skin is sandy taupe.

He is very agile, but he is weak, susceptible to disease and very flimsy.

'FireCrazy' Dolilmedtob likes orthoclase, rose gold, tsavorite, cedar wood, armadillo leather, pig tail fiber fabric, short swords, toy boats, mules for their stubbornness and sperm whales for their vengeful nature. When possible, he prefers to consume fire imp, spotted ratfish, sunshine and dwarven sugar. He absolutely detests mussels.

He has a great feel for social relationships and a sum of patience, but he has very bad analytical abilities and poor creativity.

He occasionally overindulges. He is confident under pressure. He is rarely happy or enthusiastic. He is entranced by riddles and puzzles and loves to debate issues and ideas. He is put off by authority and tradition. He doesn't like to compromise with others. He is modest. He is compassionate. He possesses great willpower. He is extremely cautious. He needs alcohol to get through the working day. He likes working outdoors and grumbles only mildly at inclement weather.

'Modi' Kunled has been ecstatic lately. She admired own fine Bed lately. She slept in a good bedroom recently. She dined in a fantastic dining room recently. She has complained of thirst lately. She made a friend recently. She is quite pleased with making an artifact. She was caught in the rain recently. She admired a fine Vertical Bars lately. She has been annoyed by flies. She has been satisfied at work lately.

She is romantically involved with 'Jackal' Thronesteel. She is an ardent worshipper of Onget and a casual worshipper of Tad the Mastery of Zeniths.

She is a citizen of The Gloves of Admiring. She is a member of The Imprisoned Crew. She arrived at Delerkegeth on the 1st of Granite in the year 251.

She is sixty years old, born on the 21st of Felsite in the year 192.

She is incredibly skinny. She has a square chin. Her very long hair is arranged in double braids. Her nose bridge is convex. Her eyebrows are quite dense. Her hair is mahogany. Her skin is sandy taupe. Her eyes are gold.

She is incredibly quick to heal and agile, but she is quite susceptible to disease.

'Modi' Kunled likes olivine, nickel, red pyrope, goat leather, the color buff, cabochons, menacing spikes, sheep for their wool and sliver barbs for their wicked thorns. When possible, she prefers to consume nautilus and river spirits. She absolutely detests worms.

She has good creativity and a way with words, but she has a very bad sense of empathy.

She has a calm demeanor. She loves a good thrill. She does not have a great aesthetic sensitivity. She prefers familiar routines. She loves to defy convention. She is candid and sincere in dealings with others. She is modest. She is not affected by the suffering of others. She is organized. When she's nervous, she tends to stretch her body. She always snaps her fingers when she's greeting somebody. She needs alcohol to get through the working day. She likes working outdoors and grumbles only mildly at inclement weather.

'Rock-Eyes' Fathbekar has been quite content lately. She slept on a rough cave floor recently. She dined in a fantastic dining room recently. She has been annoyed by flies. She made a friend recently. She admired own fine Bed lately. She admired a fine Table lately. She was caught in the rain recently. She talked with a friend lately.

She is a worshipper of Osram and a worshipper of Ducim.

She is a citizen of The Gloves of Admiring. She is a member of The Imprisoned Crew. She arrived at Delerkegeth on the 1st of Granite in the year 251.

She is eighty-nine years old, born on the 22nd of Limestone in the year 163.

She is tall but has quite ill-defined muscles. Her eyes are gold. Her very long hair is neatly combed. Her nose is sharply hooked. She has a square chin. Her nose bridge is convex. Her sandy taupe skin is wrinkled. Her head is somewhat tall. Her hair is mahogany with flecks of gray.

She is agile, but she is very weak.

'Rock-Eyes' Fathbekar likes slate, lead, clear garnet, hare leather, deer hoof, gems, gauntlets and rabbits for their ears. When possible, she prefers to consume giant barn owl, goat cheese and Longland beer. She absolutely detests rats.

She has a questionable spatial sense, meager creativity, quite poor focus, a poor ability to manage or understand social relationships and little linguistic ability.

She has a great awareness of her own emotions. She is guarded in relationships with others. She strives for excellence. She needs alcohol to get through the working day. She likes working outdoors and grumbles only mildly at inclement weather.

'Sarrak' ômkikrost has been ecstatic lately. She dined in a fantastic dining room recently. She made a friend recently. She slept in a good bedroom recently. She admired a fine Trade Depot lately. She talked with a friend lately. She admired own fine Bed lately. She was caught in the rain recently. She has been satisfied at work lately.

She is a faithful worshipper of Bobrur Fragranceglitter the Bodices of Romancing and a worshipper of Bobrur Fragranceglitter the Bodices of Romancing.

She is a citizen of The Gloves of Admiring. She is a member of The Imprisoned Crew. She arrived at Delerkegeth on the 1st of Granite in the year 251.

She is fifty-four years old, born on the 8th of Moonstone in the year 198.

She is tall. Her eyes are gold. She has a narrow square chin. Her hair is clean-shaven. Her nose bridge is convex. Her skin is sandy taupe.

She is very flimsy and quite susceptible to disease.

'Sarrak' ômkikrost likes malachite, bismuth, clear diamond, crystal glass, spotted wobbegong leather, the color sandy taupe, bolts, bucklers, cavies for their three toes and giant armadillos for their thick, bony armor plates. When possible, she prefers to consume pileated gibbon, river spirits and dwarven milk. She absolutely detests worms.

She has a great ability to focus, a sharp intellect, a way with words, good creativity and a sum of patience, but she has a meager kinesthetic sense.

She is quick to anger. She occasionally overindulges. She makes friends quickly. She tends to avoid crowds. She has a fertile imagination. She admires tradition. She is willing to compromise with others. She is disorganized. She needs alcohol to get through the working day. She likes working outdoors and grumbles only mildly at inclement weather.

'Shadow' Adasmeng has been happy lately. He has been annoyed by flies. He dined in a fantastic dining room recently. He slept on a rough cave floor recently. He talked with a friend lately. He admired a fine Vertical Bars lately. He admired own fine Bed lately.

He is a worshipper of Alron Silverymine and a dubious worshipper of Alron Silverymine.

He is a citizen of The Gloves of Admiring. He is a member of The Imprisoned Crew. He arrived at Delerkegeth on the 1st of Granite in the year 251.

He is sixty-four years old, born on the 3rd of Hematite in the year 188.

He is average in size. His sideburns are clean-shaven. His very long moustache is neatly combed. His very long beard is arranged in double braids. His long hair is arranged in double braids. He has a deeply recessed square chin. His nose bridge is convex. His ears are extraordinarily broad. His nose is slightly hooked. His skin is sandy taupe. His eyes are gold.

He is quite clumsy and quite susceptible to disease.

'Shadow' Adasmeng likes satinspar, nickel silver, red spinel, crystal glass, giant stoat tooth, the color green, backpacks, bracelets and flasks. When possible, he prefers to consume giant copperhead snake and tuber beer. He absolutely detests mosquitos.

He has a great memory and a good spatial sense, but he has a little difficulty with words, poor analytical abilities and a lack of understanding of social relationships.

He doesn't handle stress well. He loves new and fresh ideas. He is candid and sincere in dealings with others. He is immodest. He finds rules confining. He needs alcohol to get through the working day. He likes working outdoors and grumbles only mildly at inclement weather.

'Jovus' Zonalis has been ecstatic lately. He had a fine drink lately. He slept in a good bedroom recently. He had a wonderful drink lately. He made a friend recently. He dined in a fantastic dining room recently. He had a truly decadent drink lately. He was caught in the rain recently. He admired own fine Bed lately. He admired a fine Table lately. He talked with the spouse lately.

He is married to Shorast Obeyceiling. He is the son of Dastot Tomechams and Atír Markrag. He is an ardent worshipper of Bobrur Fragranceglitter the Bodices of Romancing, a worshipper of Alron Silverymine, an ardent worshipper of Tad the Mastery of Zeniths, a worshipper of Osram and a worshipper of Anriz.

He is a citizen of The Gloves of Admiring. He is a member of The Imprisoned Crew. He is a former member of The Sword of Standards. He is a former member of The Early Order. He is the bookkeeper of The Imprisoned Crew. He arrived at Delerkegeth on the 23rd of Malachite in the year 251.

He is twenty-one years old, born on the 22nd of Opal in the year 231.

His quite dense wavy hair is extremely long. He is very skinny. His nose is sharply hooked. His slightly sunken gold eyes are round. He has high cheekbones. His sandy taupe skin is wrinkled. His somewhat tall ears are somewhat narrow. His hair is mahogany.

He is quite quick to heal, but he is flimsy.

'Jovus' Zonalis likes chalk, steel, fire agate, clear glass, rope reed fiber fabric, the color pink, bolts, bracelets, splints and chimpanzees for their antics. When possible, he prefers to consume giant python and dwarven rum. He absolutely detests hamsters.

He has great creativity, a very good feel for social relationships and a great deal of patience, but he has very bad analytical abilities and a poor kinesthetic sense.

He can handle stress. He is not a risk-taker. He is often cheerful. He likes to try new things. He is organized. He laughs loudly when he's excited. He needs alcohol to get through the working day.

Interlude 1:

Unlike later texts from Steelhold, these writings aren't relevant to the reign of any particular overseer.

Excerpts from the Biography of Lenehan

Lenehan was the type of dwarf that is often overlooked; the sort of dwarf that spends his entire life hauling materials to and from a workshop, making cheap products by the score for the trade depot, and drinking barrels full of Dwarven wine. Such expendable dwarves, many leaders believe, make excellent draftees, and Queen Brasswords is one such leader. Lenehan was drafted into a 10-man squad known as "The Wet Dwarf," and sent off on a long journey, mostly on-foot, to the nearby dark fortresses. Being that the squad was composed entirely of dwarves like Lenehan, it lagged quite a ways behind the more authentic units, which were soon completely out of its sight. The Wet Dwarf was soon completely off-course, headed instead in the direction of the forest retreats.

It so happened that another squad was headed in the same direction; a notable difference between the two squads was that this one was composed of goblins, who had been assigned with burning the retreat to the ground. When the two squads converged, The Wet Dwarf was forced into combat. The losses were horrible; the Goblin-squad only lost three soldiers, whereas The Wet Dwarf was completely annihilated. The only survivor of the massacre was Lenehan, who escaped with his life by dodging into a nearby river, knocking himself unconscious on the floor, and floating upstream to the Elven retreat.

He was discovered in the morning, by the princess of the Elven civilization. He awoke in the royal hospital, faced with the charges of trespassing on hallowed ground. His condition, however, forced the Queen to hold the trial in the hospital. Although he was unable to provide an excuse for his presence in their capital, through his testimony the elves were warned of the imminent danger from the goblins. The army was quickly mobilized, and, when the time came that the goblins arrived, the elves slaughtered them all in a decisive victory. For his service to the Elven people, Lenehan was granted a full-reprieve, and was permitted to stay in the retreat until he recovered.

For the next eight months he slowly recovered from his battle-injuries, and during that time, he began to become absorbed in Elven culture. He learned about their religion, their cuisine, and, most notably, their views on plants and animals. By the time he was ready to leave, he no longer viewed the elves as nuisances, as many other dwarves do, but rather as a group that deserves legitimate respect. He was eager to share his experiences with the dwarves back at the Mountainhome.

Upon his return home, however, he found out that he was not to be considered any sort of hero, for it turned out that the Goblin-campaign was a total failure, resulting in the deaths of every Dwarven soldier who embarked on the journey. The former soldier had not even entered the gates of the Mountainhome before he was beaten and arrested by the Fortress Guard. Branded a deserter, he spent 50 days in prison, spending every day allowing his rage to build against his own kind. Meanwhile, he longed to be back at the retreat, where he was cared for and respected. When he was finally released, he, along with some of most obscure, reviled, and deviant dwarves he could find, founded the "Elf-Party," a radical group, dedicated to having the Dwarven culture abolished, to be replaced by the Elven counterpart, either by political takeover or by convincing the elves to conquer the Mountainhome as a protectorate.

Working in a secret headquarters located in the depths of the mines, the Elf-Party would sneak into public areas and vandalize images of dwarves and their gods, carving images that support the idea of a regional force in their place. Countless battle-axes were thrown into the magma pipe, to prevent their wood-cutting application. Dwarven caravans were met with unfortunate accidents on their way to the trade depot, to prevent dwarven trade. Such actions, however, could not last forever, and the headquarters was eventually found by the Fortress Guard, and the members, excluding Lenehan, were executed on the spot. The headquarters was then flooded with magma, to destroy all remnants of the party.

Lenehan was put on trial for various counts of treason, murder, vandalism, heresy, and elf-sympathy. Pleading "not-guilty," he was sentenced to life in prison, a sentence that he served for 11 years of his life. Due to his radical beliefs, it was feared that he would be violently murdered by the other prisoners, so, despite many objections, he was given a private cell. When the time came that the prisons had overflowed, his cell was much-needed by the judicial system. He was selected to be one of the prisoners to be transferred to the new penal colony, and Lenehan saw this as an opportunity. Unlike the Mountainhome, this new fortress would culturally be a blank-slate.

Instead of an outpost by the dwarves for Dwarvenkind, he would make it an outpost by the dwarves for Elvenkind!

Esmodean's Journal, Day 1

I don't remember much, to be frank. I do remember waking with a cool breeze blowing. It was gentle, but the bump in the road we hit after that wasn't. I banged my head pretty hard, and that may have contributed to my lack of immediate memory. What else?... Oh, right. Should you be reading this, it's quite possible I've died in battle(courageously, I may add), or you are snooping in my room. Should the latter be true, be assured I WILL find you. I was convicted. What of, you may ask inquisitively. Injustice is the keyword associated with my conviction. I did commit theft, that is true, but is hardly a terrible crime; surely a fine is ample reparations? No. I was also convicted of kidnapping. They wronged me. She wanted to be with me. We were going to live together in the wilderness, make a home together, and love each other until literally death do us part. Were ever there a pair closer than we? Hardly imaginable. But that is the past. You see, her snobbish parents refused to allow us to be together. When we ran off, her parents sent the guard after us. We hid for some time, but they found us eventually. Such was inevitable. I'd only hoped for more time together...

When the guard found us, they immediately chained me and then treated her like a babe rescued from the goblin's dark clutches. They tortured me, disbelief in their eyes that the son of a renowned militia commander could commit such a felony. They were wrong. Did she even explain, she who I had loved so, and she me, whose name I do not even recall for the pain of betrayal is so overwhelming I fear myself entering a fit of rage? Yes, betrayal. She realized rather quickly she'd have to go back to those narcissistic parents of hers, and in a moment of self-preservation, abandoned me and sobbed to them, rather than face the punishment her parents could possibly think for her. She made me out to be a criminal. Do I truly blame her? I feared her parents before I had even known her. They were monsters and put my father to shame as far as discipline goes. Honestly, I feared for her. But did that mean I condoned her betrayal? Certainly not. That which could have been my salvation turned out to be my damnation. We were brought back after the soldiers had their fill of torture. My adopted father abandoned me, for a crime so great shamed our family, and he disassociated with me under the pretense that I was never truly his son. My betrayer whose name I have never since spoke- nay, even thought, was more than happy to deliver me into the hands of the justices, who sentenced me with hardly a second thought. My sentence was horrific, (at the time, since I hardly feel fear anymore, to be specific anything anymore) I was to be put in the caverns alone, with no armor, weapons, even my clothes were stripped. No food, no water. They sealed it after me, and utter darkness ensued.

At first I panicked. Certainly I would die! What with no means of ensuring my survival, my death would be arduously slow, and to say nothing of the pain. However, I remind you I was raised by a military man. What was panic turned into determination, I liken to tinder being set ablaze. I raced around, collecting some simple plants I managed to identify as edible. I could hear, though not see, the underground river, and I had two necessities filled. I had begun to think of a way to create some temporary light using the towercaps underground when I heard a terrifying noise. One dwarfs hear and flee from, even those who had willingly fought the Forgotten Beasts, the Titans, Dragons even, whose

fire could melt a mountain. I heard the hiss and the whistle of air as the webs flew, and I instinctively rolled behind the aforementioned towercap, which shuddered as the weight of the webs hit it. I felt the panic begin again, but this time I immediately worked through it. The giant cave spiders were something of myth to dwarves who'd never seen them; something they'd never want to see. I reached up and grabbed a sturdy branch while I felt the spider crawl slowly towards me, the ground tremoring in fear. I heaved and the branch snapped, perfectly how I wanted it to. A very jagged end, perfect for spearing with. I crawled up into the tree, careful to avoid the webs and making as little sound as possible. As the spider suddenly lunged forward around the tree to catch me, I jumped down right as he passed me, and landed square on his back. It realized I was in a position of advantage, and began writhing to get me free. Certainly it's undulations would have launched me in any direction which would've ended me, if not for the branch which served its purpose. Ramming the branch into the back of the spider, it gave me a handhold to keep on the monster, and his writhing only opened the wound further. Despite the injury's small size in comparison to his size, it grew larger and he decided I wasn't worth the effort. With a great final heave, he threw me and the branch away(despite causing further injury to himself) and then crawled off. I was in disbelief that I had lived, and had suddenly decided a being of great power was watching over me. I was unsure why as of this time, however. As I went back to beginning to think of a way to create light, after I had calmed down that I was alive, I realized light was appearing, unrelated to my idea or efforts. They were breaking back down the wall, and a small squad came in, equipped with crossbows, and one with a sword. He immediately reshackled me without a word and dragged me back outside.

I was thrown before the queen in a jumbled, nude heap. I'd never felt so shamed in my life. The queen seemed to have no pity however, as she told me that I was not suitable to just be fed to spiders. A new penal colony was being established, called Steelhold, and I was to be a part of it as far as a guard went. While they missed my narrow escape with the spider, they saw his ichor on the end of the stick and assumed what I did. She also shared I was originally to be hauler, as punishment for my alleged deed, but as I'd proven myself more useful, that my... talents, as she put it, would be used to benefit the colony.

I have respect for the queen, though I was slightly outraged at this, that I was nearly killed, just to be told that I would be more useful in a different position of danger, this time working for them. However, this was a new lease on life. And we left to the colony the following day by wagon, in the stores were a weapon or two and no armor that I knew of. And so I came to be a part of Steelhold.

I'd never been a particularly virtuous character. My moral compass has always been pointing somewhere southwest. I feel greed, anger, and many other negative emotions. But yet, I do have some good things about me. I am humble, and I am diligent, and obedient. Further, I am loyal to those who hold my best interests. I did not think the queen planned me any harm when she sent me here, rather that I would be useful in furthering the dwarven society. I only hope I can succeed. I only hope I can clean the slate, and in time bring honor back to my name, and to my family, that my father might forgive me. And that she may regret her decision.

Words of Rock-Eyes, spoken to various stones, plants, and small animals.

Hunting again.... The sun is hot, no clouds for shade. The heat makes distortions in the air, obscuring movement. The ground is dry and hard. Too hard for most animals to leave tracks. Little water, little grass. No wonder you are so few in number. Fewer soon. More will come, I think. The air smells of emptiness, a void for growth to fill. The open ground, open sky. Had my fill of walls and tunnels in prison. Too small, too full, too many eyes and beards and hands. No beards out here but mine, or that other hunter. He likes the stalking, I think. Too much for nature. Would stalk until there remains no more beasts. Dwarves after that, I think. Will keep a bolt for him. But now, the hunt. I see you, little four-legs.....

Too many words from the beards. Leader-beard always barking commands and threats and "don't you dare"s. Was surprised when I brought back kill from hunt. Should realize we have nothing to run from. Wind-faced beard makes most noise. Change, he wants. Power, direction, policy. Perhaps should change expectations. Dwarves are dwarves are dwarves. Dwarf in charge is dwarf in charge. Titles and reasons don't matter. The bolt still flies, the prey still dies. Nature doesn't change. Nor does the hunter.....

Rain. Red-eyed beardless skitter about, but they are not prey. You are hunters, aren't you? Avoid hunting me, I will not hunt you.

Noisy in the fort. Perhaps best to wait outside for things to die down. Windy-face beard is getting his change, I think. I wonder if it will taste to his liking.....

-Remains of a journal of a miner in the Highquake mines, dated est. 2 years before Steelhold, author unknown-

Journal entry #732

8th Hematite

Even after 14 years of hard digging, we have not struck adamantine. Our mining expedition leader is extremely displeased with the standards of work the miners produce these days thanks to the lack of booze. The mountain homes would not give us the luxury of a rest, so we are set to mining all day. We can be thankful that this year no one has gone insane, berserk, or melancholic. My wannabe detective friend, Firecrazy has just uncovered some sort of scheme to flood the mines with magma, and he is investigating it full time, skipping mining, which earned some angry visits from the head miner. Seriously, when shall he learn that dwarves are not meant to be detectives? This side hobby of his is slightly irritating me. General Earthgrowl is demanding so much iron for the royal army that our veins of hematite are going to be depleted soon.

Journal entry #733

9th Hematite

Another boring day. We got about a few hundred ores of iron, copper, and silver, but that is pretty much about it. Today, the doctor from the mountainhomes arrived to treat the poor dwarf that was injured by a cave in a few days ago. After looking at the state of everyone, he decided to stay here for a few weeks. On other news, Firecrazy found a piece of paper titled "Magma flooding plans". It seems to be a drawing of some complicated device that floods the fortress? Firecrazy is the only one in the fortress who has any skill with mechanics, so he is the only one that can understand the drawing. He has bought it to the head miner but he says that it is not "conclusive evidence and may be just a forgery". That is quite a pathetic excuse for just not wanting to move your lazy ass to investigate, but what can you do? Nobles are a lost cause.

Journal entry #734

10th Hematite

2 miners joined our cause, both are novice ranked, which is the lowest rank for a miner. Usually there would be a welcome celebration, but with the state of this place, the lack of food and booze, nope. No welcome celebration. Deal with it. Meanwhile, I spotted my detective friend Firecrazy was openly questioning people in the dining hall. Isn't that a little too obvious for a undercover investigation? "Er hey sorry to waste your time but do you know of any plot to flood the mines with magma? no? okay thanks". In fact, the head miner is starting to accuse HIM as the schemer, since he is the only one who can do mechanics in the fortress, thanks to his previous job of managing the complicated minecart stuff. Anyway, I doubt Firecrazy is the one planning to flood the fortress. How easy is it to just say "Oh, i don't know any mechanics, thank you." to the manager guy?

(The rest of the journal is burnt by the magma flood. The details are still unknown, but the official reason is stated to be Firecrazy. Who knows, he may be wrongly accused?)

Jovus' Journal (Entry 1)

Steelhold. The name bears promise, as does the enterprise. I was impressed when I heard about this project of the Queen's. It seems even the most parochial of rulers sometimes bumbles half-blindly toward the light of the truth. What criminals need is not imprisonment - what they need is rehabilitation. All but the most vile of criminals is capable, under the right conditions, of becoming productive members of the true State.

Unfortunately, the Queen doesn't realize her true purpose with this colony, and seems to view it more as just a prison-away-from-prison. That's fine; it just means guidance is necessary. In some ways, this is an ideal place to institute true scientific government. After all, the Mountainhomes will see, if it can be done here, it can be done anywhere, and the benefits will shine out like a beacon of truth in this world of darkness.

Furthermore, dwarves have the premier advantage of all races in adopting the true scientific State. Our native industriousness makes us ideal citizens. Even, or I may say especially, those convicted of crimes against the old regime. Work is the soul of society, and work shall set you free.

Turn 2: Sarrak

Extracts from blood-covered diary of Sarrak, Timber-Obsidian

What prison needs is not guards. What prison truly needs to continue is aim. And I will try to remove it from existence. Or... We will see.

Jackal is a good soldier. Not bright, indeed, but a true servant of kingdom and aim. All what was needed - one girl, talkative and cold at heart, to sway him from his objectives. Pathetic. If everything now goes as I suppose, he will slowly but surely fall. Not to hypocrite Jovus, not to a mindless scheme of some crazy bastard, driven by lust for power... No. Just to one girl that he took liking to. Oh, have I mentioned that she is a hot-blooded murderer and my "friend"? Just perfect.

Working... How that word sounds to you? To me, it is bitter. Despite your labor, you won't be praised. Despite your ingenious decisions, everything will crumble to dust. Despite your masterpieces, you will be eventually forgotten. And despite your bravery and skill, fruits of your labor will be used by some barbaric goblin. Ironic, isn't it?

Jovus... Interesting person, to tell truth. Nobody else perceived my hobbies as a bloodthirsty murder of a helpless animal. We will see, socialist bastard, what you will do, if some murderous raccoon will take liking to your flesh... On the other note, guard corruption moves at steady pace. All that matters now is time. And precision for strike.

Talked with FireCrazy. He can do everything for the chance to strike vein of Armok Blood. I succeeded in moving his thoughts to more mundane things and he agreed to do some favors for me. For a promise to help him, of course. Maybe I will held it after all.

Another subtle success. Poor Jackal now sees me as his friend. Sort of. He stopped today at my table and we chatted a bit. About flowers and butterflies. I barely managed to control my lips from forming into devilish grin. He completely fell for the girl, at last. I fed him a piece of advice and went my way. What a perfect day! Yeah... Let's study brain structure of a piglet!

Was in another argument with Jovus. Something about animals and stuff. I sometimes wonder, why he still tries to convince me, instead of trying to bash my brain out of head with his fists. He had some military experience, after all. Freaking pacifist.

Nasty cough tries to end my life. I thought it won't be a problem at first, but now even bisecting some pig bones left is quite a feat. I weighted a thought of this decease being work of elf-lover, but alas, he doesn't have any knowledge in plants. Quite strange...

Next page is ripped from the book, leaving just a few unintelligible words and a blood trace

Finally, crucial moment is at hand. It will be simple to break Jackal morale now. I predict that he won't even protest a lot, with rotation of local rulers, "overseers", being life-long tradition of Mountainhomes. And if he would... I have heart and will to go further.

Extracts from the journal of Sarrak, Overseer

the initial entry looks quite old, as if few last pages were ripped from the book

Nice to see ya, bloody diary! It was a wonderful day! I tried my best to comprehend bone structure of an elephant. Sometimes it feels like beasts tusks go straight to its brain, others - like they doesn't matter to that bloodthirsty giant at all.

There are some dwarves. Those, who work not as much as others. Some have their own issues. Others are smart. And they are now thinking. We must be able to overthrow guards when we will be ready for this. So, we must train for that day.



Today I planned. Many things were completed; much more still continued. Few other dwarves, which I mentioned earlier, agreed on my proposal. Now complex is getting much more complicated. It would be hard to hide, if somebody will come with inspection. But we'll be ready. I'm sure.

Oh, for the elephant bloodthirst! How I managed to bisect that damn goblin so fast and so clear?! Not much to work with... Must find something... Must...

words become unintelligible, page is stained with few blood trails

1st Slate. One young dwarf, a member of doing-nothing, eating-everything youth community of our...fortress, suddenly turned mad. Er... I was just informed by Rock-Eyes, it is commonly referred to as a "possession". Indeed, child has some interesting qualities and acts strangely... Hm... Does spiritual invasion changes body too? Maybe I will have a chance to discover.

```
Catten Oslanuvar, Dwarven Child cancels Sleep: Taken by mood.
Catten Oslanuvar, Dwarven Child has been possessed!
Catten Oslanuvar has claimed a Craftsduarf's Workshop.
Catten Oslanuvar has begun a mysterious construction!
```

Uh-oh. Small bugger threw Modi out from her workshop, walked through it, fell on ground and crawled to crafters place, where it started to shout unintelligibly in whistling, highly disturbing voice. Sometimes even I start to think that this world is too damn mad to comprehend...

a few pages are washed in alcohol, scent is still in the air

```
The Warden 'Jackal' Kalurdeler has organized a party at alunite Table.
`Rock-Eyes' Fathbekar, Silent Enigma      Attend Party
`Sarrak' önkikrost, Psychopathic Brawler Attend Party
```

"Hey, Modi! Come closer!"

```
Catten Oslanuvar, Dwarven Child has created Um
Tôsed, a tower-cap figurine of Kivish Brasswords!
Press Enter to close window
```

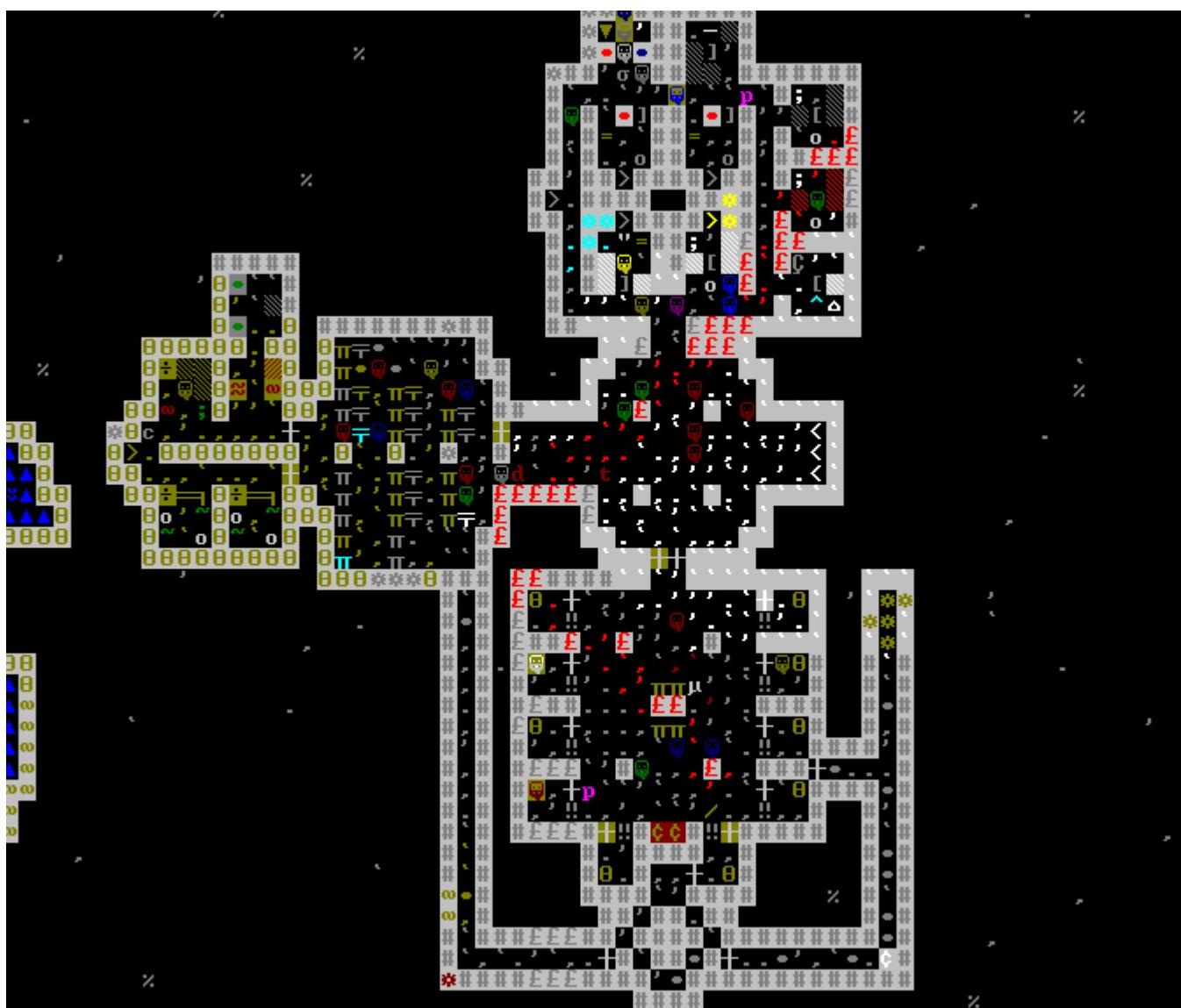
```
Um Tôsed, "The Nail of Stopping", a tower-cap figurine of Kivish Brasswords
This is a tower-cap figurine of Kivish Brasswords. All craftsduarfship is of
the highest quality.
The item is a masterfully designed image of Kivish Brasswords the dwarf and dwarves
in tower-cap by Catten Oslanuvar. Kivish Brasswords is surrounded by the dwarves.
The artwork relates to the ascension of the dwarf Kivish Brasswords to the position
of queen of The Gloves of Admiring in 243.
On the item is an image of cockatiels in tower-cap. On the item is an image of
four-pointed stars in pink tourmaline.
```



Excavation beneath sea level is moving swiftly. FireCrazy still makes finishing touches for our project. Maze must be finished this month. Jackal is occupied with other things now. I manage to keep him away from our quarters when it becomes too obvious that work goes on something completely wrong. Oh, and I have some fear for the other dwarves. Not everyone of them is dumb as basalt. There are some, that know. And some, that bear ill thoughts. To project or to me directly...

First session is done. Everyone became relieved, when they got their first chance in years to get their hands on a weapon. If I haven't planned things beforehand, now trouble would have surely occurred. Many dwarves don't trust each other, some have developed grudges, others just hate each other from the years before this colony.

Sadly, but initial plan of project had to be modified. Now, not only FireCrazy knows about it, but two other miners too. Somebody already told Jackal. But he was resting at the moment and came to inspect only today. I assured him it was only a ventilation system. He... Nodded and walked in other direction. Bizarre luck or my own plans still working for me? Don't know. But it can't last longer. Cold breeze get warmer with each day and soon new party of inmates will come. And a few guards to reinforce justice, of course.



"Ventilation" was completed just in time! New inmates were seen by Modi on a horizon!

Several notable people. Remeber I said something about Jovus? Being pacifist and all? I take my words back! (OOC: Sadly, in my first journal I have mistaken Jovus and Lenahan...) Now we have a proper elf-lover... Goes by the name Lenahan. Interesting, does he have any elf traits? Hm... Probably worth investigating... Bomber. Strange fellow. I quite understand his reasons, but not managing to steal... Eh. Oh, I was too soon. We now have Ensomden "thunder-smth". Well... He surely outclass Bomber by far. And, of course, dim-witted enormous brute. He said that he is Gob, a Bone Doctor. You know, that kind of a "bone doctor".

Village Delerkegeth, "Steelhold"					18th Felsite, 252, Late Spring				
Animals	Kitchen	Stone	Stocks	Justice					
Created Wealth:	51532*		Population:	57					
Weapons:	660*		Miners	4	Axedwarves	None			
Armor and Garb:	None		Woodworkers	3	Axe Lords	None			
Furniture:	9775*		Stoneworkers	2	Swordsdwarves	None			
Other Objects:	28701*		Rangers	8	Swordmasters	None			
Architecture:	6406*		Metalsmiths	3	Macedwarves	None			
Displayed:	5550*		Jewelers	None	Mace Lords	None			
Held/Worn:	440*		Craftsdwarves	4	Hammerdwarves	None			
Imported Wealth:	36096*		Nobles/Admins	3	Hammer Lords	None			
Exported Wealth:	3628*		Peasants	None	Speardwarves	None			
Food Stores:	419		Dwarven Children	11	Spearmasters	None			
Meat	156	Seeds	48	Fishery Workers	4	Marksdwarves	None		
Fish	63	Drink	42	Farmers	14	Elite Mrksdwarvs	None		
Plant	47	Other	63	Engineers	1	Wrestlers	None		
				Trained Animals	A	Elite Wrestlers	None		
				Other Animals	A	Recruit/Others	None		

Next few lines are scribbled in hurry

I think she noticed me... Yes. It was hard to hide... "Fisherwarf", you mother! I studied bodies left on battlefield. I know, how true warrior may

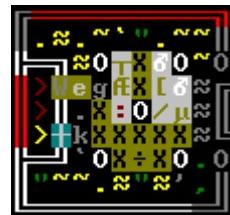
look like. And I don't know, who she is if not a guard. No one with that kind of experience would be sent to faraway place!

(OOC: Ninety four kills of various animals... And yeah, she is Bomber's wife. Nearly everyone in this party is married)

My suspicions may be true after all. Bomber hunts now outside - and no one says a word...



Elves! Shut Lenahan's door immediately!

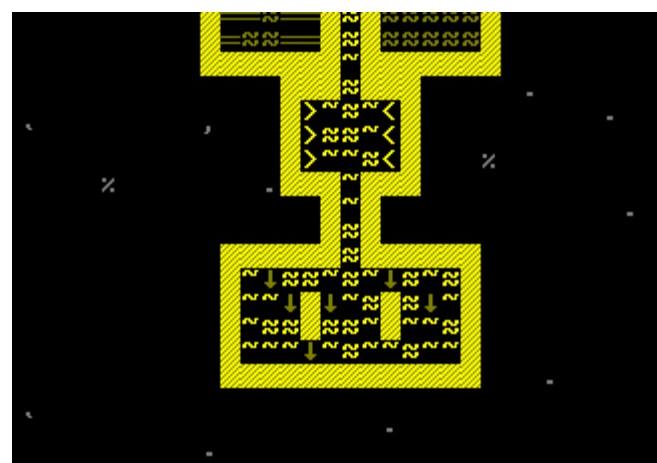


and a few scraps about height and posture of thieves

Two... Four. Six! Eight!! Nine!!!

Our colony get too many visitors. And, while Jackal enjoys his leisure time, Bomber train himself with sharpshooting kobolds.

We had some problems with wood. Dwarves happily trotted through trade depot with freshly cut logs, making rude comments about elves. The aforementioned traders were silent, even a bit melancholic. The only dwarf that could trade with them was lying on his bed, doing nothing.

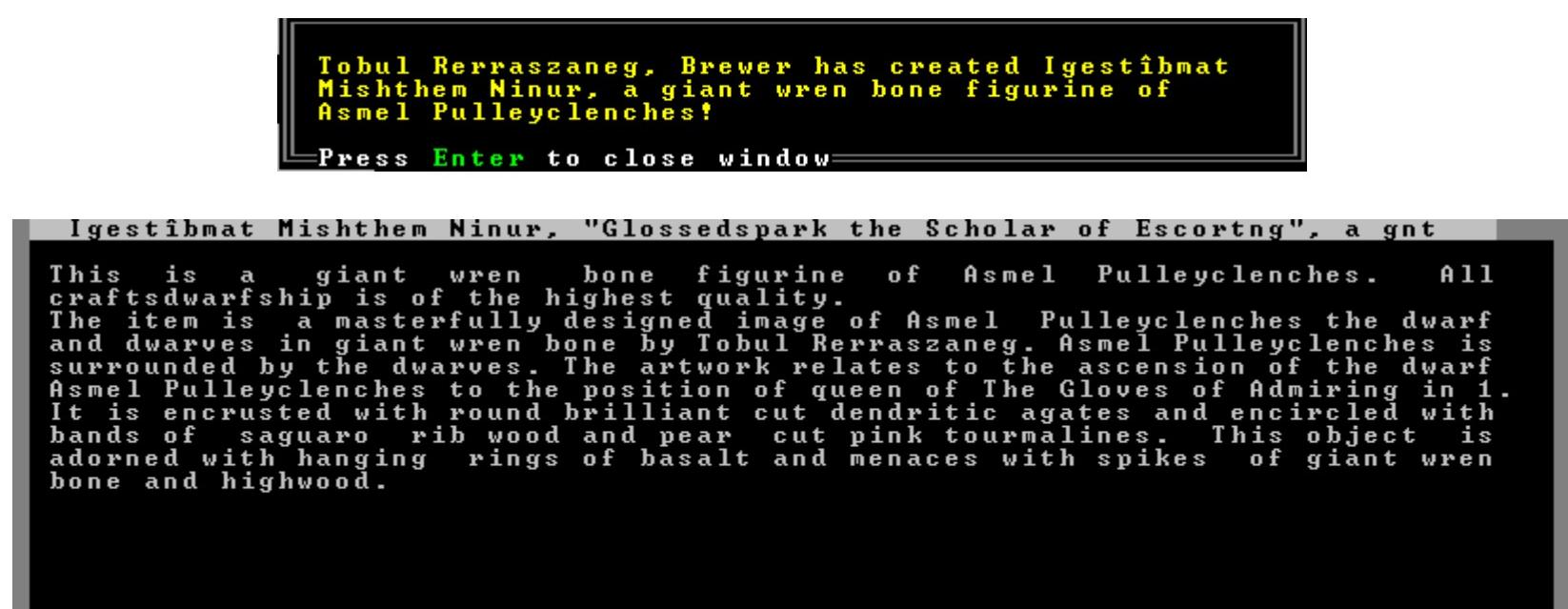


As one of my informators told me, we traded quite a lot of wood from elves, as well as some plants and fruits. Oh, by the way. I finally got my hands on the animals that came with the last dwarven party. Delicious!

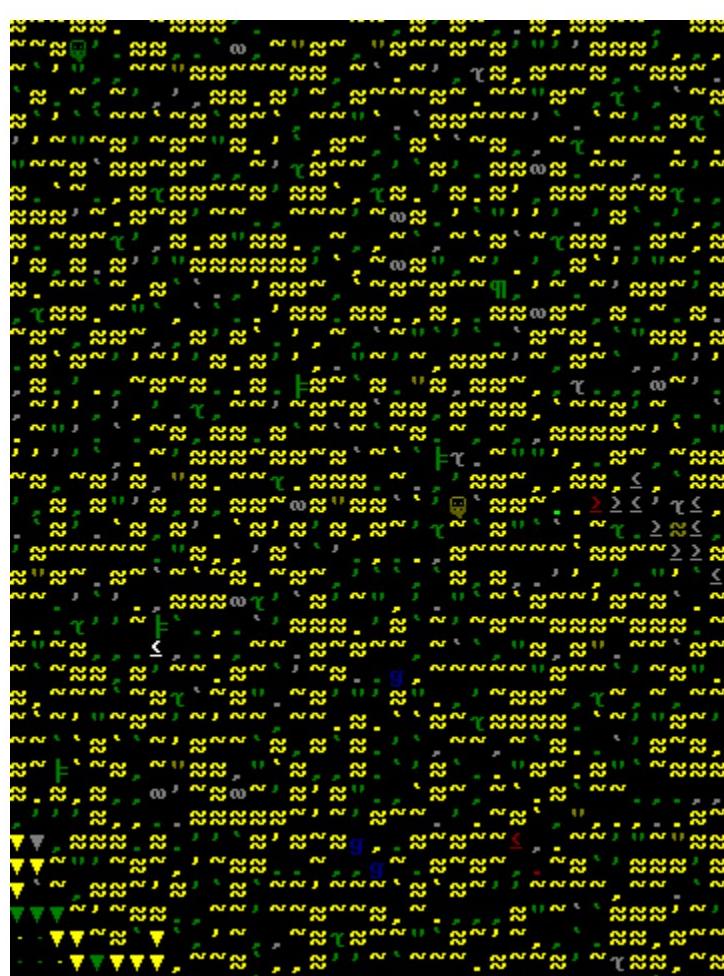
23rd Hematite. Elves are gone. Not in a bloody way, sadly. Migrants came in their steps. Not much interesting personalities, most just got unfortunate enough to piss off noble or two. I talked only with two of them. Somneth, miner in past, could provide quite useful, especially with his kind of experience. I know now, which inmate I would like to have beside me in a locked cell... The second... Only use I can see is setting panic to the population. No skills and not reliable... Hm... We will see.

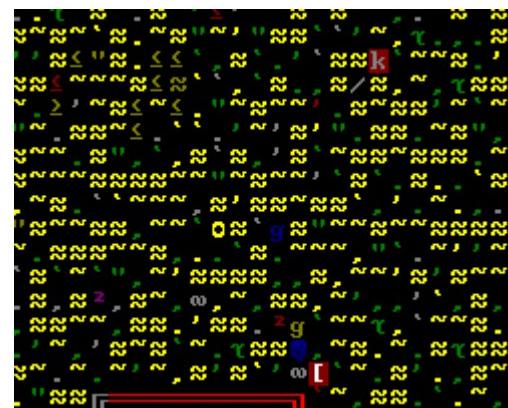
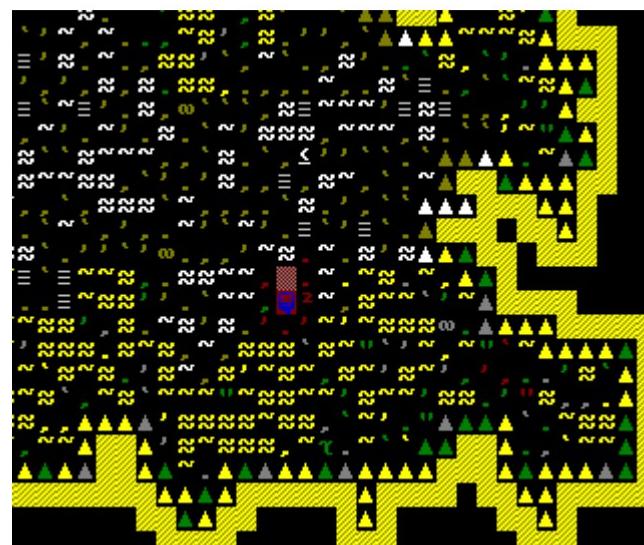
By the way, colony now look like a madhouse. Doses of prisoners doing whatever they want to, guided by few directions of guards... If I wouldn't be suspicious, now would be perfect opportunity. We could strangle two of them in sleep and... We will encounter too many problems. I'm now happier than ever by the fact that Jackal disagreed with my proposition of overseeing thing. No, thank you. Better watch my own head.

Sounds of picks striking stone deep in mines are now regular noise. From shouts and cheers I figured that they found all kind of minerals and ores down there. Well... I'm not that interested in stone. Flesh, in my opinion, is much more intriguing...



For the Bloody God! My head aches! Noise, noise, noise... Only beneath living quarters, in "project", I can be at peace with myself. Even studying new species, when everyone tries to stare from you, is problematic... I don't want it to end like the last few times... By the way, humans. And another possession...





Unintelligible passage. Goblins run away. Bomber is now no more. In a bloody way. Sadly, I only received a pair of goblin arms from this. And lost a good fellow. We just recently had interesting conversation, while drinking. He said, that his so-called wife is indeed a guardian, sent here by Queen for who knows what. On her way she stacked with him and revealed herself as corrupt and possessive person. I then assured him, that he can always come to our training room, to which he waved his hand and cheerfully said, that hunting is better. Damn...

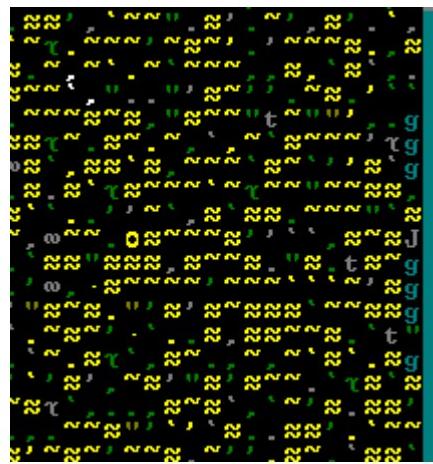
Autumn. Here, underground, it means nothing. Aboveground... It is just a bit less scorching. Or so Rock-Eyes told me. Apathy settles in. Even breaching of caverns was somewhat ignored by everyone.



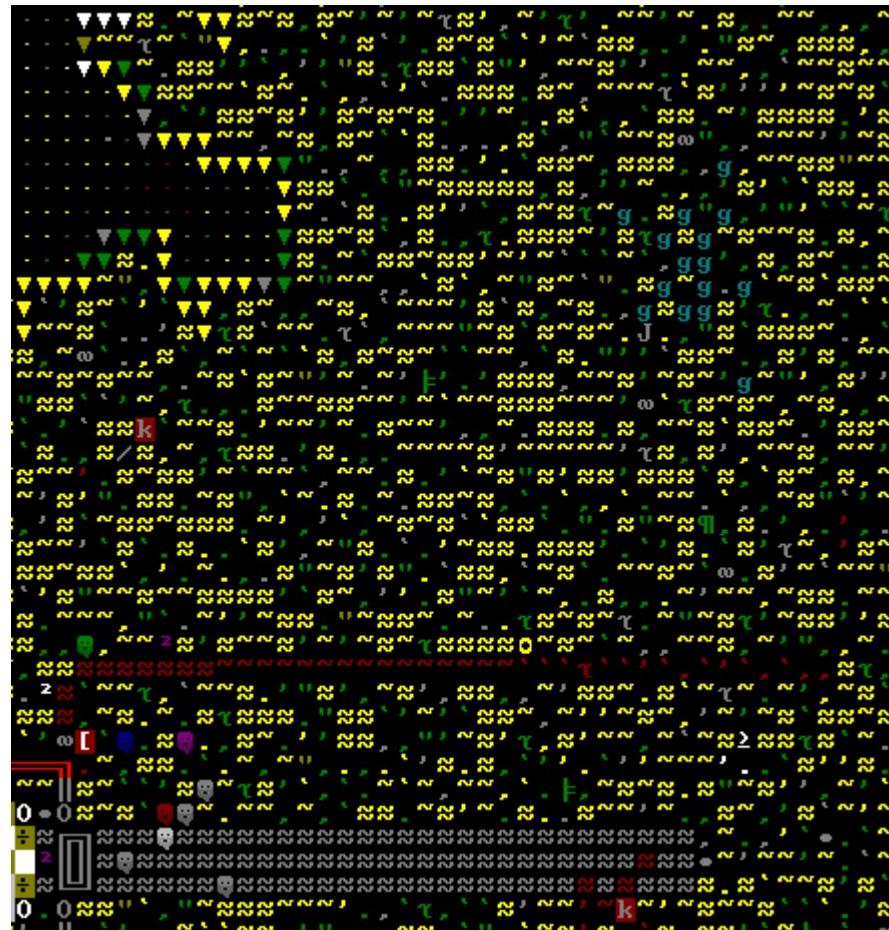
Everything goes well... Or mostly well. Miners, under FireCrazy guidance, dig to the core, to free Armok's blood. As if I will allow it to happen. Hm... Maybe later. But, obviously, not now. Caverns are quite up to expectations. Still no animals, sadly. I really want to bisect something unnatural...

Nothing happens. Autumn laziness or something. There were human traders, but I had remembered about it later, when they already went their way.

Citizens <83>	Pets/Livestock <18>	Others <23>	Dead/Missing <23>
Ngoso Olungungong, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Strodno Omospusnū, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Azstrog Edzumngokang, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Üsbu Atuospu, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Ozud Kobsnodub, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Osta Ngosoësmor, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Aslot Stoshûbulxa, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Stozu Xestdostngosp, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Stozu Smatspokutsmob, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Tode Urognako, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Stâsst Zolakdôrku, Goblin Swordsman		Invader	
Utes Ngoboolngö, Goblin Axeman		Invader	
Em, war Jabberer		Invader	
Tick Woman		Wild Animal	
Tick Man		Wild Animal	
Tick Man		Wild Animal	
Olungö Urarosnog, Goblin Thief		Caged Prisoner	
Dostngosp Ukustrodno, Goblin Mstr Thf		Caged Prisoner	
Ngom Utesszrû, Goblin Thief		Caged Prisoner	
Asno Stozugeng, Goblin Thief		Caged Prisoner	
Nako Matouktang, Goblin Thief		Caged Prisoner	
Giant Oim		Wild Animal	
Fire Imp		Wild Animal	

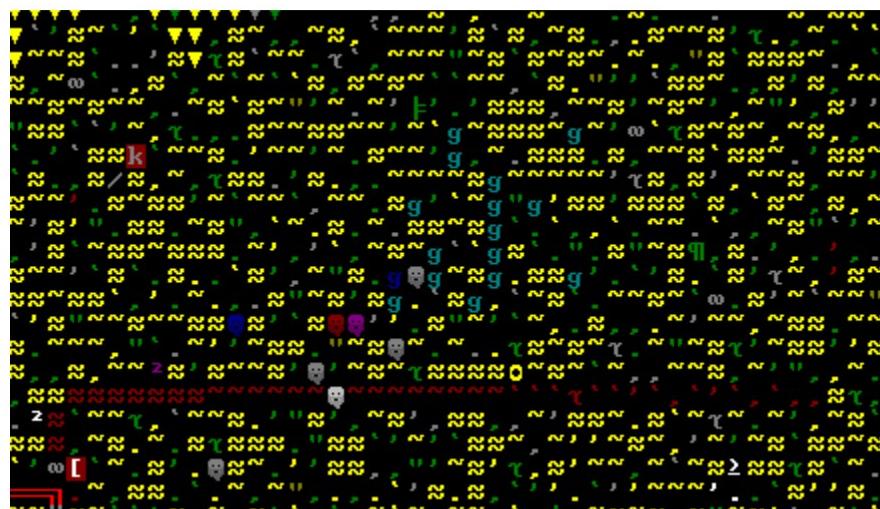


So... We are doomed. There are goblin scouting squad on a horizon! Nothing, but iron and steel will stop them. And I fear that we don't have enough of both. And, of course, only guards have armor. I barely managed to talk Jackal into giving weapons to able prisoners to help in fortress defense... Now everything depends on luck. Because I really, really don't believe in our "strength", "honor" and "dignity".

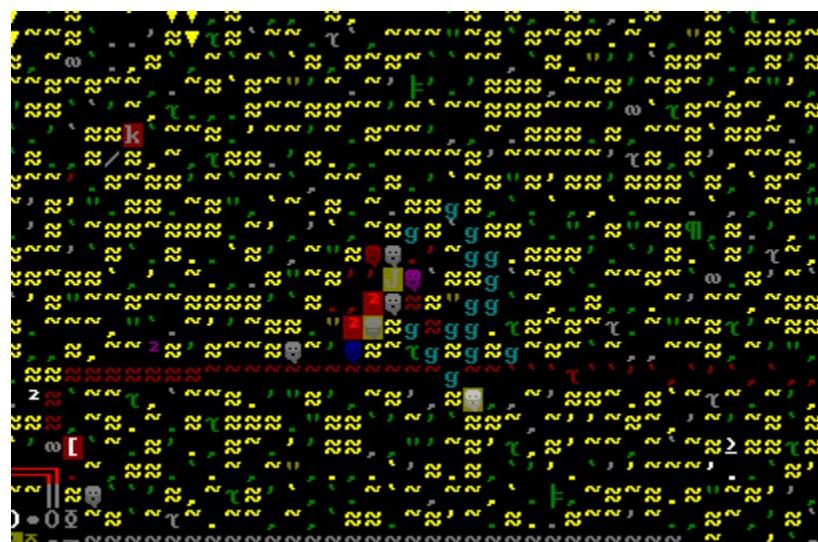


Oh yeah, I was right. Twenty weapons were roughly converted into eight inmates. Well... Not as bad, as it could be. Now we have only to wait a bit. Goblins will come...

I really want to drink some alcohol. It is not right for any dwarf to die sober.



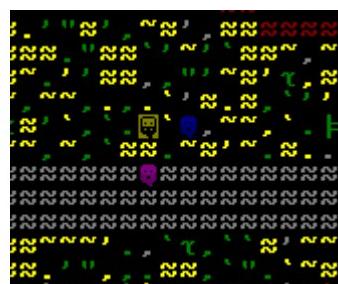
'Jackal' Kalurdeler, Warden has entered a martial trance!



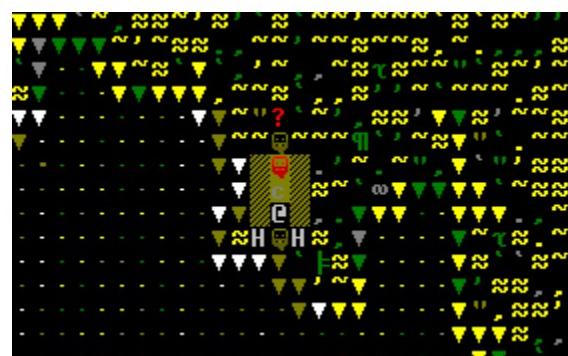
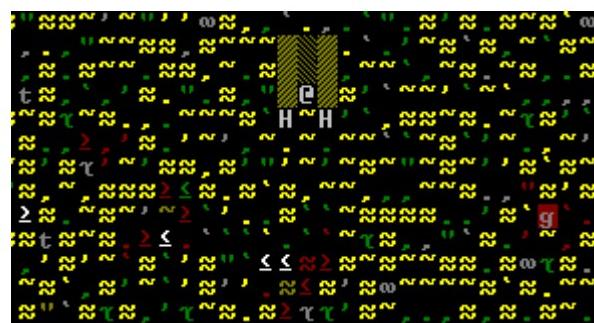
these scraps look like they were finished much later after the events mentioned

And so the battle ended. Goblin warlord fell, killed by the guards and Gob the "Bone Setter". The last one quite amazed me... Really. He bashed goblin warlord into a horrible mess. Even before he beat his mount into unrecognizable pulp. Some of the goblins tried to fight even after that. Others run. Oh, and what about me? I lie here under the scorching sun. Sweat drops from face and pain beats in the leg as I look on a dwarf procession, which takes FireCrazy back to home. He is shorter now. With just one leg and arm... He was the one, who started the fight. And he started it gloriously. From one mighty swing of his pick the great bird-like beast was sent unconscious. And, as a goblin dismembered him, he dismembered him in return. Something says to me that he will be fine. I'm far more concerned about myself...

Vultures come and go further, taking no interest in my body. Remains of the battle, which started to rot really quickly, are far more appealing. I don't mind.



Two voices. Somebody came here for me? No, probably not... Jackal. And... That cold-blooded guard. They take interest, seeing that I'm still alive, but, after some rude comments, start conversation about situation in Mountainhomes. I'm too tired to listen. Agonizingly aching head doesn't help. At all...



Caravan has arrived. I still can't get up and is restricted to slowly crawling. Back. Ho... No. I have NO home.
By the way, it looks like inmates are stealing medicine from caravan... Guards can't stop them.

This entry is done with a shaking hand, next few pages are bloodied
Ale. Sweet ale. And animals! You waited for me, fluffy? Let me borrow some knives, and I'll return!

```
Kadôl Ingishiden has claimed a Jeweler's Workshop.
Obok Fôkerlikot has become a Axedwarf.
`Jovus' Zonalis, Socialist Agitator cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump
helmet spawn.
Kadôl Ingishiden has begun a mysterious construction!
Obok Fôkerlikot has become a Fishery Worker.
You have struck pyrolusite!
→Kadôl Ingishiden, Gem Setter has created Mafol Bisek, a perfect pyrite!
```

Mafol Bisek, "The Chambers of Veiling", a perfect pyrite
This is a perfect pyrite. All craftsmanship is of the highest quality. On the item is an image of oval cabochons in pyrite.

```
You have struck pyrolusite!
Kadôl Ingishiden, Gem Setter has created Mafol Bisek, a perfect pyrite!
Erush Olonlòr, Animal Dissector has given birth to a girl.
Erush Olonlòr, Animal Dissector cancels Drink: Seeking Infant.
Ducim Lalturnil, Milker has given birth to a girl.
Ducim Lalturnil, Milker cancels Store Item in Hospital: Seeking Infant.
Atîs Lolokatis, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
Id Zulbanrulush, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
`Rock-Eyes' Fathbekar, Silent Enigma cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump
helmet spawn.
`Rock-Eyes' Fathbekar, Silent Enigma cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump
helmet spawn.
`Rock-Eyes' Fathbekar, Silent Enigma cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump
helmet spawn.
You have struck olivine!
Tobul Rerrasaneg, Brewer has given birth to a boy.
→Tobul Rerrasaneg, Brewer cancels Brew Drink: Seeking Infant.
```

Babies... Oh, Armok, babies... They are everywhere! Argh!

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Equipment mismatch.
Domas Lolokbal, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
Atîs Lolokatis, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
The Dwarven child Dele Uthmikrakust has organized a party at alunite
Table.
Domas Lolokbal, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
`Sarrak' ômkirkrost, Psychopathic Brawler cancels Butcher an Animal: Needs
butcherable unrotten nearby item.
Domas Lolokbal, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
Domas Lolokbal, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
Zasit Cogastesh, Fish Cleaner has given birth to a girl.
Zasit Cogastesh, Fish Cleaner cancels Store Item in Stockpile: Seeking
Infant.
Etur Duthalkonos, Butcher has given birth to a girl.
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Solon Thobbim, Farmer has given birth to a boy.
Solon Thobbim, Farmer cancels Brew Drink: Seeking Infant.
You have struck cinnabar!
Nish Bonrekiden, chief medical dwarf has given birth to a boy.
Ingish ònulasdûg, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
Ingish ònulasdûg, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
Ingish ònulasdûg, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.

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Domas Loloibal, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
'Jovus' Zonalis, Socialist Agitator cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump
helmet spawn.
Atis Loloikatis, Planter cancels Plant Seeds: Needs plump helmet spawn.
Erush Nàzomlikot, Stray Cat (Tame) has adopted Kikrost Kolteshkad,
Dwarven Child.
Avuz Tulonarkim has grown to become a Billy Goat.
Tosid Idamkin, Furnace Operator cancels Smelt galena Ore: Interrupted by
Gorlak.
Asen Othôsimush, Wax Worker cancels Store Item in Stockpile: Interrupted
by Gorlak.
Unib Ügredsbrek, Engraver has given birth to a girl.
Unib Ügredsbrek, Engraver cancels Store Item in Stockpile: Seeking
Infant.
Zaneg Bidnozasmel, Fishery Worker cancels Store Item in Stockpile:
Interrupted by Gorlak.
Spring has arrived on the calendar.

```

I locked myself from all this madness. Betrayals, murderous goblins, babyfloods and even maniacally laughing crippled FireCrazy have nothing to do with me for now. I need rest. Just some proper rest...

Interlude 2

It keeps happening.

Lenehan's Journal, Entry 1

From the Journal of Lenehan, bound in fine rope reed fiber cloth, pages made of tattered pig tail fiber cloth crudely sewn in with yarn. The ink is runny and thick, and the writing is scratchy.

Date Unknown

Even in the lowest depths of the Dwarven prison, one can sometimes hear the jovial conversation of the guards. I heard early on that the good queen was building a penal colony and was flushing guards and prisoners out of the Mountainhome. It didn't take me long to figure out that I was to be sent as well; after all, I was, perhaps, one of the least-liked dwarves in the entire fortress. Realizing that I had a journey ahead of me, I set to work to create this journal so that I could properly document my experiences in my new home. All I had to do was tear up the Elven suit that I smuggled into prison, as well as some of my prison garbs, to create a bound-book with pages. Next, I took the bones from the meat scraps I had been forced to suffer in the prison, whittled away at them with a stone, and made myself a set of crude pens. My own blood was used as ink until, in the colony, I had access to the real thing. In truth, I was quite prepared by the time I was snatched away by the guards.

The journey to the colony was long and hard, though at least I was outside among the natural world, it did give me time to think. Away from actual form of government, the prisoners would eventually rise up and form their own government. Although they would likely hold onto to their culture for some time, it would be much easier to convert them to the Elf Party without their queen. I was excited, though at the same time, I wasn't happy at the thought of returning to the mountains after the journey in the outdoors.

I was quite happy to discover, when we arrived at our destination, that the colony was not build into a mountain! This is perhaps the first instance in recorded history that a Dwarven outpost has occurred in such a way. This shall make it even easier to convert the inmates. I was introduced to my cell, and set about discovering the ins-and-outs of the prison. As I had expected, the prison is practically an anarchy. Though it has an actual warden, he seems to be quite lenient, and anyone can see that the true leader is a dwarf named "Sarrak." This sociopath represents all that is wrong with Dwarven culture, but the other prisoners take orders - likely out of fear - from him, he's the governor. I don't think he likes me very much, so I'll have to lay low, recruit my followers carefully, and strike when the time is just right. We'll see who wins command of this fortress, my friend.

Maskdwarf's Journal, Entry 1

Diary of The One Prophet of the True Gods, entry 1:

Today I set out with this misguided group of fools and miscreants to Steelhold. Having talked to them, I have found a few who may yet be converted and see the truth that our society covers up. Of course, they mustn't know what the dwarves call the true gods, not yet. To do so would shake their faith and leave them afloat, for the false gods to once again take hold of.

On a similar note, the true gods sent me a vision last night. It is this that compelled me to write in this journal, lest I forget. They showed me a glorious future, dwarves living as their servants, as we are meant to be. I presided over the dwarves, ensuring that everything was well for them under the will of the true gods. This is the future they promised me. This is the future I must grasp. For they have reinstated me as their prophet, and I cannot fail. Not this time. This time, nobody can stop them.

Asmooth's Journal, Entry 1

The blistering heat of the desert was punishing for every dwarf under it, for they were more accustomed to the underground. These dwarves in particular were more accustomed to small, damp rooms underground with nothing but rats for company, all apart from the silent one who seemed accustomed to day after day of sweltering heat and glaring light. In the distance, a shape appeared. It could have just been another mirage, but their escort seemed pleased to see this one and they hadn't been deprived of booze for years on end, so it was probably real enough. The sound of

the tides coming in and out were soon audible above the shifting sands, and the guards began to relax, their duty complete. The wagon shuddered to a stop, and the criminals were ushered out, at sword point if necessary.

"There's your new home, children," one of the soldiers shouted as the wagon turned back for home. "You can escape if you want, we'll pick up your bones next time we're passing!"

As the new wave of Steelhold's migrants began trudging towards their destination, one of them held a hand up to his mouth and spat, then held the golden medallion he'd been hiding up to the desert sun and said his first words in years:

"I always hated the sea," Asmoth sighed.

Turn 3: highmax28

Journal of Modi, Cutter

1st of Granite, 253: The Chaos Begins

Its been so long since I've written in a book... It's fitting, so precious and wonderful... I'll be constantly writing in here. Things happen when you take the head guardsman and have him wrapped under your arm. We're claimed lovers, but I use him to my advantage. I hate all guards and soldiers after what they did to me... They don't think the kill of my squad captain was justified, but it was justice and justice it shall be! We have all been sent here as punishment from the queen who made this place a penal colony. I have no problem with her Majesty in doing so, and many are grateful, but my vengeance and hatred goes towards our General, who was condemning me to court martial. Jackal may be one of his men, but I doubt that he is like him. Still... You can never trust anyone... Not even if you actually DO have feelings for them, and I don't.

There was a bit of chaos in today and it turned me into the new overseer. A gorlak broke into our halls and I killed it, but the head smacked Sarrak when I cleaved it. He got angry and started throwing a fit and the guards tried to hold him down. This is where things got ugly. The soldier and more murderous convicts, like myself, got in and started to fight each other with our fists, just for a good old fashioned brawl was what many of us say it was for. No one was killed, but it turned more chaotic when even the NON soldiers and guards joined in, everyone bashing each other about like no tomorrow. I didn't see some of the more reclusive of the convicts like Shadow or Rock Eyes, and even the political ones, like Lenehan and Jovus, where nowhere to be seen. In the end, the guards where forced down, and then the other convicts and myself managed to hold them down. Jackal then came with his unit with maces and other weapons, hoping to contain us, but he failed. When we had them all tied up and restrained, I went up to Jackal and I put a soft hand on his face and I told him he can be let go with his guards, provided that he lets me run the show. The look of sadness upon his face was gut wrenching but so sweet at the same time... I whispered into his ear and told him not to worry, he'd still maintain all control but all projects and plans were under my command. He nodded, as if he had no real reason to say no. I then ordered them to be immediately released and kept under watchful eye under the convict soldiers, who would become the new guards.

I am now the overseer, and in my dominion, you might as well say I am a goddess, for what I say now is law. This fortress will be one of Justice and TRUE righteousness. I will not be cast down in chains again as long as I live, and I will never bow down to ANYONE ever again. I'll also continue to be jackals "lover" even if he thinks I betrayed him, but we'll see what happens...

Lenehan's Journal, Entry 2

1st Granite, 253

No dwarfs were in sight today, so I took a stroll outside of my cell. As I walked the musty halls, my cigarette burning in my mouth, I decided that I would get some fresh air, even if it meant facing the incredible heat. As I walked through the main hall, however, I was met with a satisfying sight. The dwarf Modi, that feisty lass that seduced the warden, managed to launch a total mutiny! I must say, though I expected this to happen eventually, Modi was not even my fifth-most-expected mastermind of such a takeover. Though this does not directly benefit the Elf Party, at least that tyrant Sarrak is deposed and, from what I understand, quite weakened from excessive violence and heat; foolish dwarf!

The time is now for me to make my moves to restore the Elf Party. I'll need to recruit new members, the children will be the most easy, and I'll need a new headquarters. While I am certainly not the most favored inmate, the change in leadership will likely result in some extra freedom for me. I have also heard from some of the other dwarfs that there is a doctor to be transferred here. Apparently he's an absolute crook, one that stole from the Queen herself. I hope he has legitimate medical experience, for although I have been studying hard in order to complete my "Ultimate Solution," I am neither alchemist nor doctor. Perhaps his dislike of the monarch will allow me to make an ally of him.

I think its high-time I ingratiate myself with Modi. She may be smart, but she's no politician, and she'll need help to govern this fortress. Perhaps I could be "of use" to her; perhaps she could be of use to me?

10th of Slate: Rule of the Convicts

The best part about this whole situation is that the guards are too in fear, or appear to be, to actually try and reclaim power from us. Its been quite some time, and Jackal doesn't want to even look at me. I don't blame him, but he'll come back eventually. I also ordered the from gate to be closed up. I plan to have a network of towers built up so it appears as if the guards kept some control over us after the riot. Not much word has gone outside the halls about it, but if they ask, we got an explanation and other plans. For the most part, it'll appear as if we have a committee of Convicts that kind of went overboard with their rights and whatnot, and after the riot, a compromise was given. Amongst this was better lodgings for us convicts, which is why it's being engraved for us as I write. Yeah, we'll have bars still covering our bunks, but we're free now. And because us convicts rule now, we now get to do mostly whatever we want. So far, it seems birthing is one of those... Several children were born in the last ten days, let alone last month. We now have 32- make that 33 children now. With the amounts of us no longer working the guards chores, many of us are idle. I've decided to take a quick run through the workshops and give some jobs out. Having a standing workforce of mostly convicts can still be

dangerous if they're not working or happy. I also discovered most of the guards were recruits, barely able to hold a weapon properly, let alone defend themselves. I felt a little bad, but with the number of convicts to guards being so high, we HAD to take over. There was no denying that we needed power and a voice. I'm debating on letting either the political guy or Jackal become mayor, but I think I'll leave Jackal in power in title while I pull the strings. Hopefully I can talk to him again so we can get some more work done. Perhaps a kiss or two may make him lower his guard?

19th of Slate, 253: Sarrak's Death

I was just informed after the riot, Sarrak locked himself away. When we tried to bash open his door, we smelt rotting flesh and saw the horror; Sarrak was dead. I told Jackal to get some coffins made, but then we found out the craftsman workshop was claimed by an insane dwarf. All efforts to remove him were effortless, so I guess the name will be placed on the coffin itself, and not the headstone. Oh well... We then added some people to our archer squad, but they refuse to fight for some reason... Odd... I may have to have the convict army straighten them out...

17th of Felsite, 253: Elves, Diplomacy, and Arguments

An elven Caravan came to us and Lenean was eager to greet them. I for one, despise them. I fought many of them in the Dwarf-Elf wars, and they're cruel and malicious. Lenehan could see the hate when I saw them approach and tried to convince me they were better than how I saw them. I grabbed him by the throat and held him off the ground and told him to keep his tongue where it belongs or it will belong to me. I threw him off to the side. I watched friends die on those fields of war by the monsters that are called elves. When they came to us, we offered them a choice: leave us all their goods or they die. They chose the former obviously and ran away crying. All the time, Lenehan giving me a look of pure hate. Pitiful elf lover... I would have him locked in his room for days without food or water until he came out begging for forgiveness, but I'll leave him be... I'll make sure we'll get him where it hurts eventually...

Lenehan's Journal, Entry 3

17th Felsite, 253

In retrospect, I should not have thought the dwarf Modi would be any less of a tyrant than Sarrak, who now burns in Hell, was. When the Elfish trade caravan arrived at our outpost today, I was eager to discuss diplomacy and trade with the group. Modi, however, seemed piqued by my friendly attitude towards them. True, I have already grown quite used to this, though Modi seemed different; it is not spite for the elves that she feels, it is pure, unmitigated hate. I tried to calm her, I tried to explain what great benefits close relationship with the elves could bring to our culture. She refused to listen, and grabbed me by the throat to the point that I could hardly breathe. When she released me, - by dropping me, with quite a force, to the ground - she ordered the elves to leave the outpost without their goods, under penalty of death. I gave her a stern look to show my complete disapproval with her doings. My glance was returned with a grin, a grin like that of a maniac; the grin reminded me of Sarrak.

On a more positive note, the children of this penal colony have proven to be quite adaptable. So eager to break from tradition, these youths are. Their progressive attitudes will aid me well.

18th of Felsite, 253: Well Bollocks...

As the elves waddled away in shame, a Minotaur came rushing towards the gates. I assembled the army and we charged, as gloriously as we could. A marksman out of ammo ran out and proceeded to get every bone in his body broken in seconds. We ran out to help but then a squad of goblin hammermen came out of hiding and ambushed us. We fought as the minotaur grabbed the marksman's arm and ripped it off, proceeding to beat the others with it. After the goblins were dispatched, we all charged the minotaur, still beating a stray swordsman with the marksman's arm. It was then Jackal came and fought the Minotaur and began a great battle against him. More guards showed up to fight, slowly wounding the monster. Within seconds, Jackal lead the forces of the once demoralized soldiers into a glorious battle against the great megabeast. The last guard finished it off by splitting the skull of the minotaur with his axe. We left the body there, and the wounded were brought inside. Hopefully, we can train for more problems like this faster...

1st of Hemetite, 253: Summer Chaos

First of the things that happened during the summer was the kidnapping of a baby. Then Asmooth began her work, working with the patients and attempting to clean them. And by attempt, I mean she didn't because we have no access to clean water... I opened the way to the caverns to she can get some clean water. Salt water, not only is it undrinkable, its not very clean...

LATER:

Another snatcher made off with another child... This is bad... We may have to keep a guard post at the gates with our dogs...

24th of Malachite, 253: Snatchers and Migrants

Well, we got more migrants today, thankfully to replace the baby that was kidnapped not too long ago. I swear, these goblins are getting bold... We got a total of 12, bringing us to a total of... 142 dwarves... Wow we're starting to get overpopulated... It started raining which felt good on the heat that usually plagued us. Otherwise, it's been quiet... Too quiet...

5th of Gelena, 253: Diagnosis Reports

Well, a child grew up to become an adult, so we threw him into the army. The convict army of course. We then went up to those that were wounded and saw all were healed quite well... Except one mangled recruit that also had most of his body destroyed by the minotaur. Almost every bone in his body was broken, and Asmooth said he would never be able to stand or grip properly ever again. With the cold look and her calm demeanor, she's kind of eerily good with his work. Well, the guard tower that we're trying to fake is doing well in construction, but the roof of the

damn gatehouse is yet to be built. And we're out of bolts! How can we have a marksman squad if we can't shoot!? Jackal seems able to talk more and he came open to me about Sarrak's suicide, thinking we could've saved him if we opened his door.

As for our 50+ idlers, I'm thinking about arranging a large scale project with the masons so we can give a huge lie that the convicts now run the penal colony. And good news, we now have some engravings on our bedrooms.

Asmoth's Journal, Entry 2

Asmoth's Log, Galena 253:

Patient 1

Patient name: Irrelevant, subject is unlikely to be of use to Steelhold ever again.

Injuries: Serious motor nerve damage, several broken bones, lost one limb (arm), severe psychological damage. Some cuts were acquired during treatment when he attempted to steal my medallion, though of course, this did not affect my treatment of him. Much.

Notes: I'm glad of the opportunity to be able to study the prowess of one of the legendary megabeasts first hand. Of course, it would have been ideal for the militia to capture the beast so I could study a live specimen, but the corpse is a fascinating subject by itself. Oh, and I suppose it would have been nice if Subject had escaped uninjured.

Additional notes: I've attempted to convince Modi to lay a few cage traps around Steelhold's wilderness so that we can obtain some live test subjects, preferably of intelligent species. Related: I also mentioned to Modi that it may be a poor idea to antagonise both races willing to trade with us, though I didn't press the issue. Our leader clearly either has some deep psychological trauma or is a kleptomaniac sadist.

Patient 2

Patient name: Lenehan

Injuries: Blunt force trauma over most of his body, minor axe wounds, bruising on the throat several days old (prior confrontation?), deep seated belief that elves are not bastards.

Notes: Lenehan was brought to me by Jackal, one of our fortress guards, after a confrontation with Modi. He seems almost suicidally determined to convince her that elves have some merit as a species. As I have been unable to obtain a live test subject to experiment on (and the elves were always inexplicably unwilling to provide one- during the wars, elven prisoners had an unfortunately high death rate, perhaps in revenge, perhaps simply a contrary effort to prevent me testing them). In any case, I recommended that he not raise the subject again with Modi in charge, though I have a feeling that he'll be one of my beds again soon enough.

Additional note: After Modi's actions towards the traders this year, we may be on the brink of elven invasion. If this is the case, Lenehan may prove a dangerous subversive, likely to attempt to force us to surrender to them. If not, then he may suffer psychological damage from battling a race he admires so. The only action available to me at the moment is to hope that the elves are more patient than they typically are.

22nd of Galena, 253: Human Trade Issues

Humans came with a large caravan today. I like humans more than elves, but still not by much. I went with Jackal to negotiate prices and the like with them, only we all got into an argument. It got heated enough to the point the guards of the Caravan pulled swords on us so we wouldn't attack... BIG mistake. The Convict army arrived along with the marksman and we all readied ourselves. The humans then said they will leave if we leave them unharmed, but then I went up to the caravan guard, beat him to a pulp for aggravating us, threw him in their caravans and said they must leave all their stuff behind if they wish to not return home like that or worse. The traders, really frightened by a woman dwarf such as myself, they left all their goods behind and tended to the wounded guard as they left. Bastard got what he deserved. Now Lenehan doesn't mind this, but he's been unhappy with me since the Elf robbery. He also seems to be mingling a bit with the children... That's more than terrifying.... I must talk to him before he starts getting the children to think elves are equal to dwarves...

27th of Galena, 253: Confrontation and Trolls in the Dark

A ranger was attacked by a troll today, and the army marched out to attack it. A recruit began to bash him with his crossbow before anyone else arrived, scaring the beast farther into the depths. He passed his fallen comrades corpse, and then fought harder. Then another recruit came and finished the job by twisting his newly gained longsword into the beasts skull. I may have missed out on the action, but I commend the guards for their work. I made my way back upstairs when I saw Lenehan talking to the children again. I went to confront him when I heard him speaking to them about how great elves are. I knew it! I grabbed him and pulled him aside into my new room and had a chat with him. And by chat, I mean I began to hit him with my axe handle several times before I asked him what the hell he thought he was doing. He said that not all elves were evil right away. I asked him to prove it to me. He looked up and said he cannot prove it if my mind was already made up. I kicked him in the stomach and told him I got plenty of time, and he needs to convince me to not kill the elves in the next caravan if there is one. He then began to tell his tale about his goblin raid gone wrong, and the elves took him in and healed him and whatnot. It was almost storybook, but I told him then what I thought of them and why I thought so.

I had a squad I was really close with during the Elf-Dwarf war and the captain was a good friend of mine, perhaps like a brother, but then again, we were all brothers and sisters when the battle starts. We were assigned to go fight a small camp of them which held no more than twenty elves and their mounts. We were outnumbered, but we were the best of the best. We were armed to the teeth with steel and we attacked them. It turned out twenty elves became two hundred in the matter of minutes, for reinforcements came by at the worst time. They captured us all alive, but wounded, some mortally. They then began it by killing off the captain, my best friend, first, by lopping off his arms and then gutting him like an

animal as he was still breathing. And then they... They ATE him... They did this until there were three of us left, and the hate in our hearts was too great. They lectured us on how trees were sacred and how animals are friends, not a food source. Everytime they said that, I spat on them and told them I would skin every last one of them until my captain was avenged. We were kept alive for days without food or water, and they constantly cut us with their knives of wood, and my friend who got more out of line then I got mauled by one of their war-tigers. He lived, but his face was disfigured, and his arm was gone. He died the next day. Then, luck had it that our forces came in the night and attacked the camp. I was freed and my last squadmate and I took our gear back and slaughtered our captors more than the army did themselves. He was killed later by the camp's leader who I killed myself when I split his skull.

And ever since then, I have hated elves, and the reason why I'm here? An elf came in and killed my new squadmate and my captain said let him go when he was caught. I killed my captain and the elf got away still. Lenehan stood silently until he burst out laughing when I finished. I then proceeded to kick the shit outta him, not caring if he was begging for mercy afterwards. Jackal came in and grabbed me before I could kill him, and Lenehan ran off bruised and cursing me with every inch of his soul. He may be a crossbowdwarf and a rebel, but this is MY fortress, and it's MY rules, and I will NOT be mocked...

20th of Limestone, 253: Bags and More Death

Sommeth just died today. Asmoth says it was from infection. I'm just glad we got plenty of coffins and some useless holes filled up for a graveyard. Lenehan has been avoiding me and I want it kept that way. I had someone watch over him to make sure he didn't talk with the children anymore, so that way we can maintain proper order. That tower was finally finished and engraving is finally done on my room. All I need is my furniture placed and I'm all set. As for the cells, they're now being engraved as well. I constantly walk among the others now, maintaining order and justice as I deem fit, kind of like as if I'm hammerer but with an axe. I then gave Jackal the hammerer position, delivering my justice wherever I deem it. He seems to be under my arm again, so this is good. I also seem to be falling more for him, but I cannot say it properly, because marriage only makes it harder to work with him sometimes...

Our weaver made the most useless bag ever. It is literally a silk bag with BASALT coating it. Why would you make a bag out of that!? I had Jackal give him a good thrashing for being useless. The sod is still alive since Jackal used his fists, but he's lucky. Recuits are now learning how to hold their weapons steady, now becoming swordsdwarves and the like. WE may have a fighting force yet!

23rd of Sandstone, 253: Asmoth and Migrants

Asmoth and I had a small meeting in which he told me to have some cage traps set up. No problem I told him. He also cautioned me to not provoke the Humans and Elves. I told him the Humans acted uncivilized and the Elves are not any better at their best. He just shook his head and reminded me of the cage traps for testing.

Regardless, more migrants arrived today, bringing our total number of dwarves to 156, which is a very, very large number indeed. Lenehan seems to be talking with other dwarves, but not about elves... This is VERY strange indeed... What could he be talking about?

Later:

Our miner just gave birth to triplets... oooooh boy...

8th of Timber, 253: Justice

Today I began my life as the new Captain of the Guard. I started by fixing the mandate order that was ignored by the spinner... He received a beating within inches of his life. It felt so good when I heard his bones crack against my fists... especially when I cracked his skull. He won't be breaking any more laws... Or doing very much else now. Jackal thinks I went a little bit too extreme, but I deemed it necessary. I then went to Gob and then gave him a thrashing for another violation of a production order. He was enraged for sure due to this, but it felt wonderful... They cannot do anything to me at all since I rule now. Asmoth went and patched up his busted nose and his cut open hand. That'll teach him... Everyone is starting to get back in line. I pass by Lenehan every now and then just to make sure he isn't violating the new "No Elf Lovers" law I added. That will make sure he doesn't try anything funny with the children again

22nd of Timber, 253: Dwarven Merchants and Rumors

I just got word that the caravans from the mountainhomes have arrived. I let Jackal do all the talking but I stood by, after all, the mountainhomes knew we were lovers, so its fine. We traded some food and bolts, and some wood, but not much else. We offered them some stuff as well, and Jackal then went and met with the Liaison. Hopefully some good will happen in the next year's caravan.

We also have a murder that occurred, but I am the only one who knew who did it... Why? Because I am the law, and I was the one who apparently did so. But justice is justice, no matter what the consequences are!

LATER:

An ambush, right in front of the merchants! This is bad... To arms! Before we arrive, the caravan guards grab their gear and hold the line. One is wounded but not killed. HE tangles with the goblin, strangling it and bashing its skull in. Then our team of crossbowdwarves arrive and unleash a barrage of bolts into the squad of goblins. They retreat but not without some casualties. Some snatchers trying to take it as an opportunity to strike flee as the guards catch them and kill them quickly. The barrage of bolts continues, but the goblins are too far now. We were lucky but the swordsman who was hurt isn't doing so well... Her leg is broken and cut open. I fear she may die before she returns home...

4th of Opal, 253: Traps and Problems

I was informed another snatcher was found. Good news is, we caught him in our traps that Asmoth wanted built. Bad news is we need more traps now. I also saw a ranger kick off the craftsman off his workshop. He wants crap for some reason. LEts give him his stuff and let him leave; we need bone bolts!

As for that incident with the murder, Jackal claims he's going to find them and toss them into the cages he just put up. I may be captain of the guard, be he's still technically warden. Maybe that's why I fell for him? Regardless, I may have to pin this murder on someone... Perhaps that Elf Lover...

17th of Obsidian, 253: Justice?

I'm writing in haste, and I'll tell you why.

I was writing up the report for framing Lenehan when the guards, Jackal excluded, showed up backing up Lenehan. His bruises healed, but he looked rougher than before. He grinned maliciously. I grabbed my axe and demanded what the meaning of this was. Lenehan smiled wider and said I am charged with the murder of the spinner, as the Bowyer was the one who witnessed the whole thing but was too scared to say anything. The guards then came and grabbed me. Just then we all felt a horrible feeling come over us. Lenehan dropped his crossbow and we all ran upstairs, as did the convict army as we passed by them. We looked outside the gate and saw the forces of the goblins marching on Steelhold.

I rallied the forces after I backhanded Lenehan for trying to do what he did. I told Jackal to lead us to battle, and we rallied our forces outside the gates. We will fight the enemy off or die trying!

23rd of Obsidian, 253: The War Ends

I can only recall what I saw, which wasn't much. Jackal was there at all fronts, so most will be said from what he saw. A lone axedwarf ran out, barely a novice and was killed after killing a goblin. He was a guard. Marksddwarves came and unleashed hell on them, killing many of the forward attackers. Then their archers returned fire, killing three of our archers. We captured several of them and some hamster men for Asmooth. I realized that we lost some good men, but we defeated them at last. It was then Lenehan and the Archers all aimed their crossbows at me. And the guards surrounded me. I readied my axe and Lenehan held his hand up. "I want him alive, enough blood was shed today. Modi, by the order of Steelhold, you are convicted for the murder of the Spinner and abusing power like a tyrant. You beat people constantly and you broke the wills of several here. You did a bad thing by beating up Gob, that spinner, and myself. Now the entire Hold wants you out of power." I looked at Jackal who was off to the side, not part of the group but not doing anything. Could I blame him?

"What do you want to do then, elf pig?" I spat on Lenehan and he proceeded to beat me with the crossbow. I then fought back and we exchanged blows, but he pinned me down. The other guards then put me in chains and walked me down to the jail hall.

28th of Obsidian, 253: Parole and new Order

Jackal then came forth and then spoke up. He said as Warden, let me go, but he will keep an eye on me, like parole, but worse. He then said as punishment, Lenehan should take over. Everyone was surprised, a guard letting an ELF LOVER take over the fort? As Jackal took me out of the cage he then proceeded to smack me with his mace a couple times. He then said it was to make it appear that I was beaten for justice. He then whispered as we walked off that even though Lenehan takes over now, he has plans to eventually bring power back to the guards. And to do it, he needs my cooperation and the cooperation of others. He agrees that an elf lover can't take us over, but he'll let it go for a year at the latest and let power jump to another convict until he regains power and military might. I nodded; because anything was better than being led by your enemy...

Interlude 3

Maskdwarf's Journal, Entry 2

I have arrived at the miserable fort the nonbelievers sent me to as "punishment". What little they know. Nobody noticed me as I entered the fort, all the better to enact my plans. Nobody will know about me, nobody will know I am here. That is, until the time is right.

It is the new year. I watched from the shadows as the "Warden" handed over leadership to the elf worshiper. While I have no problem with elves, they are not the chosen people of the true gods. It is us, the dwarves, who must inherit this world, over the corpses of all others. It is as the true gods demand.

Finishing his writing, the masked dwarf laid the quill back in its holder. He knew what must be done.

Kneeling down, he placed both palms to the earth, feeling for the power of his gods. It came as a rush, washing over and through him, into the fortress. Instinctively, he knew what it meant: the gods were sending dreams to spur followers to action. The next morning, every dwarf would wake up having had a glorious dream of all the things they had ever desired brought to fruition. Bending the power in the way only a true worshiper could, he added these words to the end: "These things, and more, can be yours, if only you believe."

Turn 4: Gnorn

Part I: Spring

1st Granite, 254

The plan worked better than I myself could have ever imagined. Modi has been deposed, beaten, and made a tyrant in the public's eye. The good warden was eager to reward me for my services to the colony, and provided for me a seat of leadership in the fortress. This is exactly what I have been needing for so long; the Elf Party finally has dominance. My plans have been piling up within my quarters, and now the time has come to execute them. My first order of business was to officially repeal the "No Elf Lovers Act" set in place by Modi, who has been officially discharged from the police force, and replaced by an approved member of society.

İngiz Zuntırmonom, "İngiz Zuntırmonom", captain of the guard

I have begun to take steps to improve the way of life within these halls. My goal is not to completely destroy Dwarven culture, but rather to improve upon it; to use Elfish culture as a base for our empire. Only through a strong relationship with our Elfish friends can this civilization last

one-thousand years. I must gradually phase out the old ways, for if I simply ban everything the citizens shall revolt. Various reforms shall be put in place whilst I work on my ultimate project.

I have left the military for now, in order to focus on my political goals. In addition, I have appointed myself to the position of official manager of the fortress, as there was no one in that position heretofore. Look upon your new leader Steelhold, for he has come to immortalize your people.

Asmoth's Journal, Entry 3

Asmoth's Log, 1st of Granite, 254.

It seems I am to be condemned to silence once again. Modi has been ousted for the murder of some spinner in spite of blaming Lenehan. I'm pretty sure I can prove neither of them actually did it, but why listen to the doctor? It's not like we save lives or anything... In any case, this murder makes me worried that there may be a vampire present in the fortress. More importantly, however, I now have a few subjects I can continue with. For these tests I will use dwarves who aren't doing anything anyway, where an observer is necessary, so the fortress continues undisturbed.

Test Number 1: (Granite 1 to Granite 3)

Subjects: None.

Items used: One goblin corpse, one dwarf corpse (former spinner), one hamster man corpse, some animal meat.

Hypothesis: In spite of dwarves commenting on how goblins smell terrible and are evil, this is simply psychological due to the long enmity between the two.

Method: Part one: I dissected the corpses, exposing the guts and other viscera. When I asked some dwarves if they would like to be blindfolded and then sniff some corpses, they looked at me strangely, so I had to rely on my own findings.

Results: Part one: The corpse of a goblin smells no worse than a dwarf's. If anything, the hamster man was the most foul of the bunch. Additionally, even though dwarves regularly comment on how a goblin's guts 'reek' when they are spilled in battle, they smelled roughly the same as a dwarf's, allowing for the goblin's carnivorous diet.

Method: Part two: I cooked some of the meat from the dwarf and goblin, then mixed it with a sample of animal meat. This has the added bonus of disposing of some evidence of my tests. I then sent this meat to the dining area, not wishing to be refused again, and observed the results.

Results: Part two: Dwarves don't seem able to distinguish dwarf or goblin meat from that of non-sentient animals. However, when informed of what they were eating, those that had taken goblin meat seemed very queasy, while those that had eaten dwarf meat began vomiting. As such, I think that it is simply a cultural taboo that prevents us consuming each other as the elves do, though it is clearly thought worse to eat your own species than another. Even elves tend not to eat other elves unless they are of another tribe.

Aftermath: I was forced to give those that participated in part two of this test a hallucinogenic to discredit them should they go to our new overseer, though his love of elves might mean he' wouldn't have a problem with it anyway.

Moisturizer's Journal, Entry 1

This is an elf tallow soap bound journal. All craftsmanship is of the highest quality. It menaces with spikes of elf tallow soap and is encrusted with oval-cut slade cabochons. On the object is an image of Moisturizer the dwarf and dwarves in elf tallow soap. Moisturizer is laughing. The dwarves are making a plaintive gesture. The object refers to the release of the dark creatures of the Underworld at Moonmoon by Moisturizer in the year 250.

4th of Granite, 254

Labcoat-dwarf decided to steal my prank.

Labcoat-dwarf put dwarf and goblin meat in our food. I've been doing that since I came here. I never told anyone. Seems that now since labcoat-dwarf told everyone about the meat they'll all be testing for dwarf meat in their food so I can't do my joke. But that doesn't matter. We seem to think alike. I like this labcoat-dwarf.

I didn't really care when he told us there was dwarf meat but the dickcheese next to me threw up all over my boots. I don't like it when people puke on me. Their vomit has been all inside of their stomach and insides, and I don't like other people, so having something from inside someone else upsets me. So I forced some more down his throat.

The guards stopped me and started beating me before sending me back to my quarters but I didn't care. I was busy thinking about how I could interact with labcoat-dwarf. I don't know his name but he seems interesting. Maybe I could get him to tell me why he stole my prank. Maybe I can try again with elf-meat. Should make the new overseer angry. I don't like him, so I want to make him angry. He likes elves, and elves don't use soap. They smell nasty and do sex with trees when they should be burning them to ash so they can make lye and soap from tallow. I think Lenehan does sex with trees too but he doesn't tell us. He's probably ashamed of it. He should be.

Maybe I'll make soap out of him next. Yeah. I should do that.

6th Granite, 254

There was a rather unfortunate occurrence today, for the foolish miners who were tasked with digging out a section for my study dug into a damp section and the proposed site is now flooded with ocean water. A minor setback, but I'll manage to find a new site.

Meanwhile, a damned goblin made off with one of our children. We'll need to increase our security in order to repel those retched creatures.

17th Granite, 254

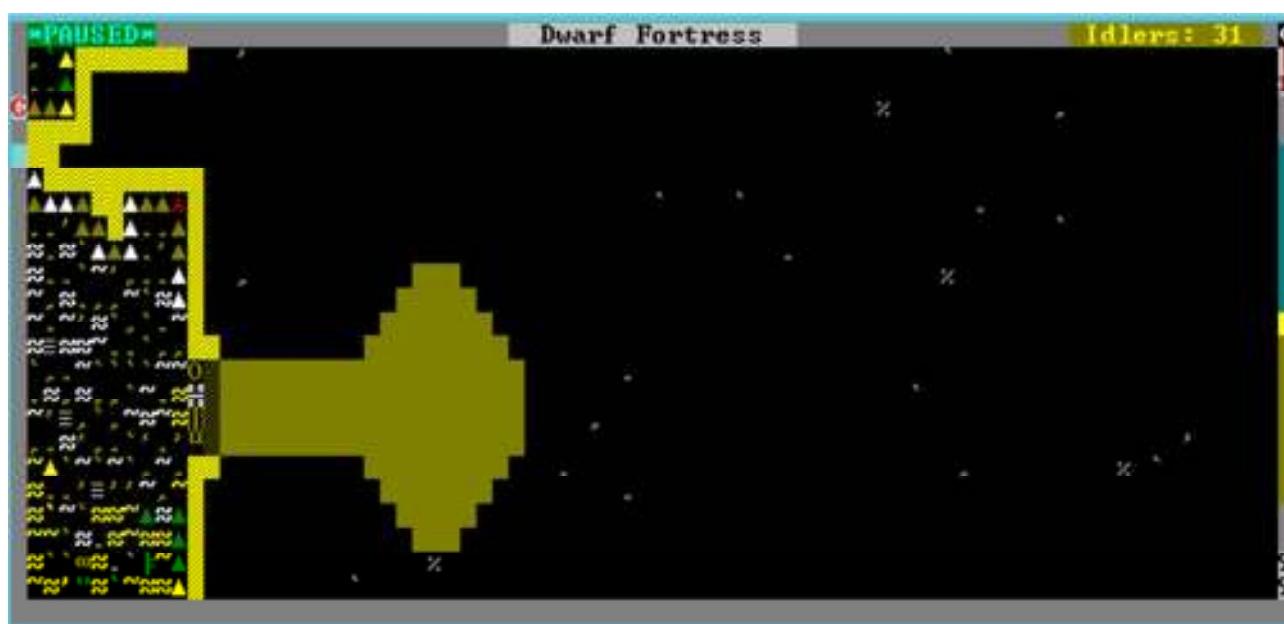
Today I cancelled Modi's ridiculous and continuous order for bone bolts in favor of a more useful item: rock pots. There is enough rock in this fort that we can make so many of them and they have the benefit of being able to hold the liquor that our race relies so heavily on.

20th Granite, 254

A kobold thief was spotted within our fortress today. No one managed to kill it, though it did not manage to escape with any of our goods. More security is definitely necessary.

25th Granite, 254

That the other overseers of this penal colony have had the tendency to lost their position in humiliating or life-threatening ways has prompted me to commission immediate construction of a personal mausoleum by the shore. It shall be made entirely out of wood, and shall include caskets for my wife and me. My poor wife, imprisoned with me along with our son for the mere "crime" of relationship with an "elf-lover."



15th Slate, 254

I found many of the denizens of the fort lazing about in the dining hall, and ordered them to get to work on my tomb, despite them having no experience in carpentry or architecture. These lazy dwarves merely sap the resources of the colony and do not contribute anything to its leaders.

23rd Slate, 254

Construction on my tomb has caused our supply of wood to run low. As soon as the Elfish caravan returns, we'll be able to obtain some humanely-harvested logs for us to make use of. Hopefully, that Modi didn't cause them to declare war on this outpost. Speaking of her, I have not seen her lately; no doubt she is plotting my downfall.

28th Slate, 254

Troglodytes have been spotted ascending the stairwell deep within the cavern. I've sent the military to take care of this issue, for I have no doubt in its militaristic ability. I have also decided to finish Modi's guard tower, just as a way to improve the asthetic architectural design of this prison.

12th Felsite, 254



Today the elves arrived at our outpost with their trade caravans. I eagerly rushed outside to greet them and welcome them to the fortress. I apologized for the brash treatment of their kind last year, and I promised that we would make up for that behavior with goods of the highest quality. To ensure that their stay is successful, I have had my child followers lock Modi in her chamber for now.

16th Felsite, 254



An ambush Curse them!

As is to be expected from such a violent race, the goblins have come to attack this colony once again. I personally have time to deal with such matters, and have simply mobilized the army to deal with it while I approve my production orders.

17th Felsite, 254

The battle is already over, for our marks dwarves successfully crippled the invasion to allow for our melee squads to finish off the group. I have begun to miss my military service; I think I will appoint myself captain of my own squad sometime soon.

Asmoth's Journal, Entry 4

Asmoth's Log, Felsite 17th, 254:

I may have an ally, or at least some form of lab assistant. A soap maker identifying himself as Moisturiser came to me in the night, telling me that I stole his prank, and that he had been sneaking dwarf meat into the fortress' food since his arrival. This is somewhat vexing, as it's possible the the more sensitive dwarves would have noticed the change if they hadn't been getting that meat for months. It also means that my hallucinogenic is faulty, since he remembers the revelation perfectly. I was somewhat worried when he walked in on me cutting up one of the dead elf merchants, but he seems eager to participate in my projects so I gave him the meat just to see what he'd do with it. Needless to say, I kept what was necessary for my new project: I'm adding elf meat into Lenehan's food supply in order to find out if he shares their belief that the dead can be eaten, or if he is simply a dwarf who admires elven beauty. If the former is the case, then I shall have enough ways to blackmail him that I shall be left in peace to do my research even if discovered and can stop with this tomfoolery of drugging my test subjects. (Interesting note: adder venom does not function as an anaesthetic for goblins. To be honest, I don't think I ever believed it would. Giant cave spider venom will give the appearance of unconsciousness, but my tests indicate that they are, in fact, fully conscious. I've never had a patient survive long enough to ask them about it.)

Additional comments: I have obtained a new labcoat. It is made of dwarf leather. It menaces with spikes of elf leather and is encircled with bands of goblin leather. I had to have it made in secret, and can only wear it in my lab, since I think those who see it would react badly. I think I may be able to show it to Moisturiser. He seems like the kind of dwarf who appreciates art when he sees it, and if not... well, he doesn't seem sane enough for the rest of the fortress to take seriously. Does that mean I, too, am insane? No. I am perfectly sane. The world is mad.

19th Felsite, 254

Another ambush was spotted today, and I've given the same orders. Hopefully this shall end just as well as it did last time.

21st Felsite, 254

The invaders were fought off, but at a price. We've lost several dwarves to the group and, most importantly, all but one of the Elven merchants was killed! This injured soul will report to his forest retreat and tell his queen about the horrors of this outpost! We'll need to repair the damages done quickly and effectively, or we may be in for serious trouble.

24th Felsite, 254

The ventilation shafts connecting from my laboratory have begun their construction today. Soon, my ultimate project will be realized, and Elven culture shall combine with Dwarven! My research in between production approvals has allowed me to plan the composition of my formulae, but I'll need the help of Dr. Asmoth in order to realize my goal. Perhaps, if I hold a meeting with her...

(OOC: There was no manager in the fortress. I cannot be the only one who uses the job screen, can I?)

Part II: Summer

From the journal of Lenehan:

1st Hematite, 254

A strange, hooded creature calling itself "Moisturizer" came up to me today and demanded to know why there wasn't a soap maker's shop in the prion. When I tried to respond, it began to babble madly about the "delicious tallow going to waste." I told my followers to keep a close watch on this one, but I decided to grant his request for now.

6th Hematite, 254



Today that blasted miner who had claimed a mason's shop for himself finally came out presenting his creation.

Weight: 27F Basic Value: 528000

This is a marble weapon rack. All craftsman ship is of the highest quality. It is encrusted with rectangular marble c quartzes, decorated with llama leather and encircled with bands of cave spider silk. This object is adorned with hanging rings. On the item is an image of Chancebraid the Late Hero the marble weapon rack in rope reed fiber. On the item is an image of Imush 'Somneth' Tombwill the dwarf in silver. Imush 'Somneth' Tombwill is dead. The artwork relates 'Somneth' Tombwill in Steelhold in the early autumn of 253. On the item is an image of Ingiz Stilledglaze the dwarf and dwarves in oak. The dwarves are refusing Ingiz Stilledglaze. gesture. The artwork relates to the end of the membership of the dwarf Ingiz Stilledglaze in The Gloves of Admiring in the mid

(Regrettably, this image is too big for anyone's screen.)

I had the object confiscated immediately for political examination by me. I just might end up keeping it though; I do like the dead dwarf.

8th Hematite, 254

My personal archery range has been completed. Now I'll be able to properly hone in my skills with the bows obtained from the elves. Perhaps I'll miss my old crossbow, but the long bow is truly the superior weapon.



13th Hematite, 254

The soap-making creature approached me once again to yell at me about the fort's "incapability of making soap." When I told him that we had a soap maker's shop for him to use, he responded that he needed lye from an ashery, which the prison doesn't have. If this creature makes any more ridiculous demands, I'm going to kill and eat him.

18th Hematite, 254

The first ventilation shaft has been completed. When Jackal approached me and demanded to know what was going on, I simply answered that I was sick of the musty, hot cave air of the prison and desired for all of my inmates to feel the fresh, dessert breeze twenty-four hours a day. The imbecile fell for it, and I can now have more dug without any further interruptions.



I realize now that Dr. Asmooth, to whom I am I plan on ingratiating myself, has no office to call her own. If she'll be able to fulfill the research I need her to, a proper office will be a necessity.

6th Malachite, 254

Some more inmates have arrived for us to deal with. No one notable has arrived, just a bunch of murderers and cutpurses who most-likely did not expect this prison to be led by the most-reviled leader of the Elf-Party. My child followers shall be instructed to keep me informed about these new arrivals.

11th Malachite, 254

The second vent, connecting the shafts to the dining hall, was completed today. Everything is going according to my master plan. On a related note, Dr. Asmooth's office is almost finished, and she has invited me to a meeting as soon as it is completed. This will be an excellent time to introduce the samples to her.

13th Malachite, 254

The dwarves have been complaining to me nonstop about the lack of cages in the fort, so I have ordered a large supply of them to be created.



That ought to end all distractions; I have a project to oversee.

6th Galena, 254

Today I finally found time to meet with the doctor. When I entered her office, I found it had already taken on the medicinal smell of several chemicals, as well as that of blood and rot. In the few beds in the corner rested some new arrivals that did not yet have cells, and Dr. Asmooth would occasionally take tentative glances at them, as if expecting something to spontaneously occur. Before our conversation began, I noticed that she put a notepad that she had been scribbling on in her pocket. While I did not actually manage to read the notes, I did manage to catch a glance of detailed diagrams of Dwarven insides.

She greeted me politely, and even had a prepared meal ready for me on a small platter on her desk. She glanced eagerly at me as I took a few bites, and asked me what I thought of it. I began to feel immensely uncomfortable at this point, and I became quite eager to leave as soon as possible. I rose up, placed the phial I had been carrying on her desk, asked her to thoroughly analyze the composition of the contained substance and report her findings to me, and I took my leave. I worry that the doctor is quite mad, and I now regret placing her office off to the side, away from public eye.

10th Galena, 254

A potter was found, dead, drained completely of his blood today. The entire fort points to a single dwarf, and when I looked over his records, I found that they did not add up at all. Most likely, this monster only pretended to be a convicted felon in order to gain access to this prison, where he planned to drink us dry. He has been sentenced to fifty hammerstrikes, and I'll see to it that he dies one way or another. I do wonder why vampires are always so stupid as to drink the blood of others in front of the entire fortress.

11th Galena, 254

The humans have arrived today to trade with us. Fortunately, my job as manager has allowed me to order many goods with which we can trade. Perhaps I'll be able to obtain more arrows for my bow.

12th Galena, 254

I just caught word today that the third ventilation shaft, leading into the caverns, has been finished. This one will hopefully allow the gas to reach any dwarves in the mines or the caverns, but I think I'll add one more down there just to be sure.

17th Galena, 254

A vile force of darkness has arrived!

The Goblin army is upon our fortress, and they are clearly poised to destroy the entire prison. In their squadren is Atu Uraranusp, the Human master of the goblins. The group means business, but as overseer of this prison, so do I. I shan't allow this inconvenience to get in the way of my plans. I've ordered the entire military mobilized, and I've returned Modi to active service. A part of me hopes that she'll fall in battle, but another part knows that she'll send many a goblin to the other world.

18th Galena, 254

Whilst the battle rages outside, my child informers keep watch from the trade depot. They tell me that Atu Uraranusp has been killed, slain by Gob. For a dim-wit, he certainly can handle himself on the battlefield. The battle appears to be going quite well.

21st Galnea, 254

I was forced to close the gate when the goblins deployed a squad of axemen, killing many of the human guards that were helping our forces. These goblins will

be the death of this fortress, not from killing us, but by angering the other races into doing so instead. I must also report that Modi was killed on the battlefield, along with Jackal. Those two have been a thorn in my side, and now I am quite glad that they are gone. With the gates shut, I believe that we can properly wait out this storm until it is over.

Asmoth's Journal, Entry 5

21st of Galnea, 254

I may have a problem. Not ten days after being visited by Lenehan, both of his major political rivals were killed. This has severe ramifications for both me and my tests, as I must make sure to ingratiate myself with him before I can continue. (Side-note: I am near certain that I could have saved either Jackal or Modi if given the opportunity, but for some reason my office door was 'accidentally' barred until it was certain they were dead. This probably caused several other deaths. I'm pretty sure that from this I can draw the conclusion that Lenehan is a fifth column for the elves, and his talk of inter-racial peace is a lie.) Perhaps my best course of action is to reveal my tests and results to our leader and hope to be taken into his confidence. In any case, I won't make my move until I've analysed this phial of something or other he left with me. Initial test results: bringing a small amount into contact with a patient had no noticeable effect, though the subject did die soon after. Whether this was a result of the substance or the fact that he was missing his intestines at the time has yet to be determined.

In any case, I have more important matters to attend to: Steelhold has a vampire, and I must save him from the death Lenehan has planned for him. Such a creature would be an invaluable test subject, and I may even be able to replicate his state in others, which would make our military much more effective at the very least.

Modi's Last Stand

Jackal lies slain... No, the love of my life lies slain... We fought together, talked together and even plotted Lenehan's downfall together. The plan may already be in motion for him to fall by the end of the year, even without Jackal and I, it will work. But here I am, holding my beloved in my arms as I weep for him. I never truly hated him, and I always felt sorry for when I betrayed him for power. I saw the goblins returning and I gripped my axe as I whispered a small prayer for Jackal as I left his side. There will be no more justice after I am done today. There will be no more joy in my life. There is only hate and anger. My name, is from the language known only by few, and it means "Anger". I was never truly born with a name, only given one since all I knew my life was to attack those who angered me. I fought, I killed and conquered. I feel no more anything but that anger. If I survive this ordeal, I will kill Lenehan and anyone who steps in my way... Even the children if they even cry when I kill him. I won't take power; I'll give it to someone who can truly lead us. But today, I kill those who slain my loved one. I will kill every last goblin I see until the day I die. After I kill Lenehan, I will hunt the bastards down. They will all die. I WILL FIGHT, KILL AND DESTROY!

Modi charged the horde of enemies valiantly. With the rage of her fallen lover, she goes to meet death. She slays a few before they overwhelm and kill her. She died in battle. She died knowing that Lenehan will lose it all. She died going to her heaven with Jackal. She saw Sarrak on the way there and, though he did not come with her, she stayed to watch the fortress and gaze on his book every now and then. She never did see Jackal on the way to heaven...

23rd Galena, 254

The goblins launched their full-retreat today. In response, I opened the gates so that I can practice my bowmanship on the wounded, retreating forces. The other dwarves will also be glad to steal from the corpses of the fallen; damn thieves.

Maskdwarf's Journal, Entry 6

Lenehan did not take my warnings to heart. He has continued his ridiculous elf worship and arranged the deaths of Modi and Jackal, two former overseers and possible threats to his rule. Modi was a secret ally of mine. While she would not convert, and thus is doomed to eternal torment, her anger made her a useful tool against Lenehan. Perhaps Lenehan knew this, and sent them to their deaths. I will have to seek more allies against Lenehan, lest he attempt to find me. Of all of the dwarfs in this fortress, the one I find most interesting is Asmoth. His experiments speak of a mind twisted beyond recognition, one that will be easy prey for persuasion. The fortress is also host to a vampire, one cursed by the false gods. He, too, is likely to ally himself with me against Lenehan.

I have yet to determine Lenehan's true plans for this fortress. He has been digging "ventilation shafts" that descend as far as the caverns. I have watched the progress from the shadows but have yet to determine the true point behind these. Perhaps, should they be extended, my lords could use them to escape from their prison...

I will find Asmoth in his laboratory, and there discuss the possibility of an alliance. He is not one of my lord's liking, but his aid is a necessary evil if we are to defeat Lenehan.

Maskdwarf's Journal, Entry 7

It appears I am not going as unnoticed as I would have hoped. I talked to Asmoth, but he seemed noncommittal, unwilling to make an alliance just yet. I waited around his chambers, and sure enough, an hour later Lenehan came down to talk to him. Perhaps I will have to seek more allies.

But back to my first statement. I found a dwarf I had never before seen eavesdropping outside of Asmoth's door. The blessing of the gods allowed me to pass him unseen, but I must be more careful in the future.

Moisturizer's Journal, Entry 2

24th of Galena

Angry-dwarf and the Warden died three days ago. Greens attacked and killed a lot of soldiers. I don't really care. I didn't like Angry-dwarf or the Warden. I think they were good for each other though. Both angry, both mean, both a little crazy.

But now Elf-lover's the Warden. I asked him a month ago if he could start having people produce lye but he just sent me off. He's mean. But he's not as mean as he is creepy. I think he wants to eat me, but I'm not sure. I don't really care if he eats me but I don't like the dying part. I don't know what happens after you die.

Mask-dwarf seems to know though. He keeps talking to Labcoat-dwarf about an "alliance" and the "true gods." It sounds nice. Maybe I'll ask him about it.

Elf-lover seems to be trying to be friendly to Labcoat-dwarf though. He probably thinks Labcoat-dwarf is a danger and wants to keep him under control but he should know Labcoat-dwarf's not dangerous. He's crazy but he's not mean. I've seen what he does to some of the dwarves he uses for tests, but they're all mean dwarves. I think Labcoat-dwarf's just sad because of something that happened in the past and now he takes it out on those that remind him of it.

Maybe Elf-lover's one of those people. I know he makes me sad and angry. He's mean to everyone and he's been digging holes all over the fortress. I don't know what he's trying to put into the fortress but it can't be "fresh air." The desert air is far from fresh. It smells funny and is always hot, so we end up sweating all the time. I'm tired of Elf-lover. I really think it's time I shut him up.

Maybe Labcoat-dwarf can help me.

28th Galena, 254

Things have begun to normalize at Steelhold. The goblins are gone, trading with the humans has finished, and work has commenced to repair the damages that have been done. Coffins are being built for the fallen, and funerals are being held constantly in the dining hall. I can hear their sobs through the vents leading to my laboratory; such maudlin praises for fallen drunkards. With Jackal dead, I have taken the position of mayor for myself. I am now in complete control of the prison, and I am free to do whatever I want. My project will now be even easier to complete.

Asmoth's Journal, Entry 6

Asmoth's Log, 29th of Galena.

Test two results: At last, my skills seem to be coming back to me. I managed to induce full body necrosis in one of our prisoners, and operated on him to remove the rotten tissue. He didn't even die at all! Unfortunately, I had to perform euthanasia on him, since it would have taken months for his eyes and other tissue to heal to the point of being a useful test subject once again. The smell was also irritating those who were outside my offices, in spite of Lenehan's new ventilation shafts. I'll add any non-rotten meat to Lenehan's food supply and throw what's left into the bone stockpile.

On the subject of ventilation shafts, Moisturiser tells me that they're actually intended for a darker purpose. I'm not sure what we can do about this, short of poisoning all our miners, and unfortunately I don't seem to have very much poison left. This probably warrants further thought. In the meantime, I have several barrels of goblin tallow that I need to disguise as animal tallow.

Part III: Autumn

From the journal of Lenehan:

1st Limestone, 254

Today I finished moving all of the paperwork from Jackal's office into mine. Being the official mayor of this prison, I decided it was best to take proper role of all notable inmates that survived the Goblin siege. I have listed them below:

*FireCrazy
Urist McDead
Jovus
Maskdwarf
Moisturizer
Shining
Dr. Asmoth
Rock-Eyes
Shadow*

Anyone else who was ever a notable threat to me is now dead. On the subject of my enemies, the paperwork from Jackal's office reveals that he and Modi were planning to have me usurped; such news does not surprise me. Unfortunately, the papers are incomplete and I am unable to learn of the means of usurption and the identities of any other co-conspiritors. No doubt either Jackal or Modi had expected me to look through their plans at some point, and destroyed all important information. Nevertheless, with the two heads of the operation dead, the entire plan will hopefully fall apart.

5th Limestone, 254

Although I personally do not believe in such industry, today I was forced to give in to the protests of the mead-deprived dwarves and the jobless beekeepers and ordered a beekeeping room built outside.



The extra alcohol will hopefully cheer up some of the embittered dwarves that are not too happy about the deaths of their comrades. I can hear their whining through the ventilation shafts, and it has started to become quite annoying.

23rd Limestone, 254

Today I ordered a full clean-up of all corpses within the outdoor building of the prison. We cannot have the liaison report any suspicious sights this year until my plans have been put into action. Otherwise, the queen may send a squad to inspect the prison and end my reign. Besides, not even a dwarf would want to live in such a smelly fortress.

Later Entry:

It seems as if Shadow could endure his survivor's guilt no longer. Miserable from losing almost all of his companions during the Goblin siege, today he went berserk and began to attack the denizens of the prison. A single shot from a nearby hunter was enough to disable him long enough for a miner to knock his head off with a pick, so it actually turned out quite well.

27th Limestone, 254

The vent leading into Asmoth's laboratory has been completed; that's yet another possible blind spot dealt with. There should be only a few more vents necessary to begin operations. I hope that Asmoth's tests on the solution are nearly complete, for I cannot complete the plans without knowing if I need to alter the formulae.



On the topic of Asmoth, it seems that she is caring for the vampire that was wounded by Jackal. Although he only suffers from a broken hand, the vampire is, according to Asmoth, unfit to resume fortress life as of now. I am suspicious of that doctor, and I honestly wonder what she is doing to that vampire.

Asmoth's Journal, Entry 7

Asmoth's Log, 27th of Limestone, 254.

Lenehan asked if I had nearly finished analysing his +vial+ of *unknown substance* today. I was able to head him off with vague replies about inconclusive tests and needing more funding (side note: I need more funding), but to be honest I had nearly completely forgotten about it, for two very good reasons: Firstly, Lenehan is desperately trying to clean up the corpses outside before the arrival of a trade caravan, likely in order to prevent the queen (reminder: flay her at first opportunity, then put her in a greenhouse and see how she likes it) from sending someone to investigate. This means that he isn't in the mood to object when I abscond with a few stray body parts, which means I'm drawing ever closer to completing Asmoth's Anatomy, a detailed study of the physiology of the four major intelligent species and their ancestors. Secondly, I have a vampire to test. I have him tied down at the moment, though he hasn't seemed inclined to escape ever since I started feeding him the blood my patients lose in surgery. Interestingly, he seems to have no actual physical need to consume blood, though he seems to become almost feral after being deprived of it for a week or so.

On another note, I've stopped slipping elf meat into Lenehan's diet. It appears to have no effect on him whatsoever, and judging by how he occasionally threatens to eat people who displease him, he has no mental block about consuming intelligent beings either.

On evolution:

My tests on elves have led me to the theory that they are descended from a tree-dwelling predator, due to their penchant for ambushes, and preference for attacking lone targets in groups. My analysis of both live and dead test subjects reveals an almost snake-like ability for lightning quick and very powerful strikes, but much lower stamina than humans or dwarves, which supports my theory of an ambush predator ancestry. It would also explain their attachment to trees, as they would be unlikely to be happy about losing their ancient hunting grounds and homes. It also goes some way to explaining their disdain for other races, as a creature at the top of its food chain has no need to develop empathy or respect for others.

1st Sandstone, 254

As a testament to my authority over this fortress, I have ordered three millstones to be constructed in my honor.

Perhaps they will make good trading components.

2nd Sandstone, 254

We are experiencing a very minor tantrum spiral at the moment. To combat this, I have put the beekeeping project on hold and have ordered the masons to smooth the entire fortress. That should shut up those tantruming crybabies and allow me to resume my work.

8th Sandstone, 254

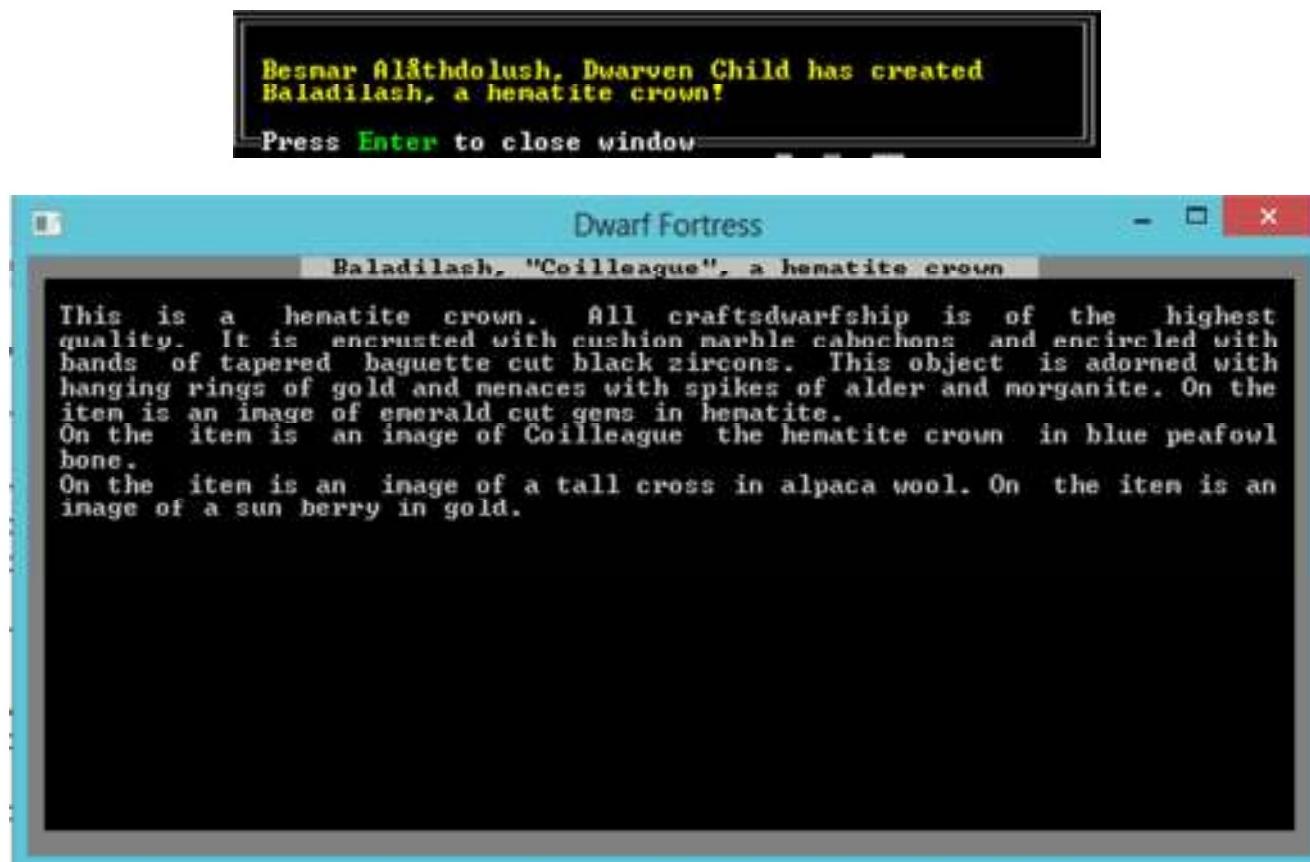
The second vent leading to the caverns has been completed today. I am ahead of schedule as far as the ventilation shaft placement goes. I can, for now, work on the current issues of the fortress, including giving it far more stockpiles.

16th Sandstone, 254

Some more prisoners have been moved to our fine penal colony. The only notable one was a peasant called "Rhaken," about whom I have read in Jackal's paperwork. Apparently he was a sort of gang leader in the past, though he is now no more than a prisoner. I'll have him sentenced to stone detailing. There is still no sign of the scheduled inmate "Bees," about whom I have also read. From what I read of him, though, this is perhaps a good thing.

18th Sandstone, 254

A child has created an artifact today.



I think the golden sunberry was a nice touch.

Rhaken's Journal, Entry 1

Peering into the Criminal Mind: Musings of one "Rhaken", incarcerated at penal colony Steelhold

18th Sandstone, year 254

I'm in. By Armok's nuts, this place is a complete fucking mess. Half the inmates are down in the dumps most of the time, and the other half are either assbackwards insane or have fewer wits than tits. Though I guess it's not all bad. Security is lax. I absconded with a cow bone on my first day, and

nobody noticed. Been making a shiv. It pays to be ready. Especially when you can't tell whether you've been sent to a prison or an insane asylum.

The warden - Lenahan or somesuch - assigned me to stone detailing. This is exactly what I needed. There are several other inmates on stone detailing duty, and I've been slowly using them to learn about this place - history, politics, rumors, unspoken rules. Couldn't be easier. Most of these bastards are halfway into depression. Vulnerable. Easy to manipulate with just a few friendly words. This should make my plan run much more smoothly.

Lenahan is apparently a former inmate, who seized power for himself around the turn of the year. Most of his political opponents have been killed. Rumor has it that he's an elf sympathizer. No wonder this place is so shoddy. He's got "ventilation shafts" all over the place. Nothing but glorified tunnels - the perfect security vulnerability. He's also letting various loons roam freely about - the kind of loons they'd shove in solitary for most of the year back in the Mountainhomes. I heard that the medical officer might be nuts too.

I have to focus. I've got to assemble a crew if I'm going to get this done right. Let's see here. I'll need...

- **Some guerrillas.** Without foot soldiers, I'll never get anything done. This part should be easy. It's a prison, for crying out loud. Likely to be a handful of veterans and war criminals in every cell block.
- **An engineer.** Always good to have a dwarf who knows his way around a mechanism.
- **A smith.** Arms deals are always profitable, and we'll need someone to arm us as well.
- **A brewer.** Running a moonshine on the side helps with both profits and morale.
- **A jeweler.** If we're going to be smuggling the fancy stuff, might as well have an expert on board to help us do it right.
- **An insider.** Someone in the system who's on our side. Maybe if I pay off a guard or two. Or even the caravan.

The sooner I can put the team together, the better. Even with the so-called "security" of the place, this kind of operation is never easy. Once I have a team, I can start to garner support in earnest from the locals.

In the meantime, I've got walls to smooth.

14th Timber, 254

The caravan and liaison has arrived. During my introduction, I had to excessively careful to make sure not to give any intimation that Jackal is dead, or more troops will likely be sent to this prison. Nevertheless, now is the time to obtain more supplies before my master plan is executed.

28th Timber, 254

Winter is but one day away, and with the new season shall come my new reign. There is a season for everything, and now is the time to conquer. As of this writing, yet another vent has been finished, and just three more, along with the machine itself, should complete my project. Just one month more, and this fortress will enter a new era.

(OOC: It seems as if I have managed to kill off most of the dwarfed readers; this is quite unfortunate.)

"Interesting" muttered the dwarf, "They have chosen another."

The dwarf paces the room, kicking a chair as he goes by. The leg shatters, but he does not seem to notice.

"How is this possible? They said I was to be their prophet. The one to bring salvation on all of dwarfkind. Did they lie? Perhaps. Though I'm certain they had a good reason... I must commune... Yes... But later... It will seem suspicious if I'm not out there often enough... I've heard rumors about me... Somebody knows... They call me 'demon worshipper'. Pah. They are the ones who worship demons, those horrific abominations, headed by Armok. But how... Perhaps... Perhaps it is his fault... Yes... He must be eliminated... I must commune."

The dwarf kneels, placing a hand upon the ground. The last thing that is seen is his golden mask, before all light fades from the room.

Deep voices seem to whisper from every corner, "Yeessssssssssss?"

"Milords. I have come with a question of great importance."

"We know what you wannnnnnnnnt. We know you quuuuuueeeeestion."

"Milords, as your faithful servant, have I earned the right to an answer. I know I am a lowly dwarf, but I have done my best to serve you."

Unintelligible whispers follow, as if the voices are discussing. Finally, they say, "What you ssssssssay is true, dwarf. Very welllllllll. All you muuuuuuust know is that we have manyyyyyyy planssssss. You are but one of our sssssservantssssss."

"Thank you, milords."

The dark whispers slowly fade as light returns to the room. The dwarf removes his hand from the ground. If such a thing is possible, the mask he wears seems to have changed. It looks angry. An anger that could level mountains.

"Lenehan and Moisturizer..." He whispers, "I am coming for you."

Outside, there is the patterning of feet. The dwarf crosses to the door and slams it open, but nobody is there...

Part IV: The High Life (Wintertime Chapter I)

From the journal of Lenehan:

23rd Moonstone, 254

Work on the lowest cellblock in the prison has recommenced; work must be done whilst that blasted liaison is running about the fort. On the subject, another vent has been constructed leading to the aforementioned cellblock. Just two more, and the plan should be ready.

**2nd Opal, 254**

I have grown too impatient with the work of Dr. Asmoth. Today I stormed into his office and snatched my phial and his notes regarding it right from his desk. The sick monster can continue his experiments in peace now. From his abysmal research, it appears that I'll need to lower the concentration slightly. I'll have plenty of time to do that before the Day of Reckoning occurs, so I'm not too worried.

4th Opal, 254

Today the bloodsucker has been permanently immured within an unfinished cell, sealed off with a green glass wall. No longer will Asmoth be able to use this one as a test subject, and no longer will it threaten our inmates. May it spend the rest of eternity in insanity.

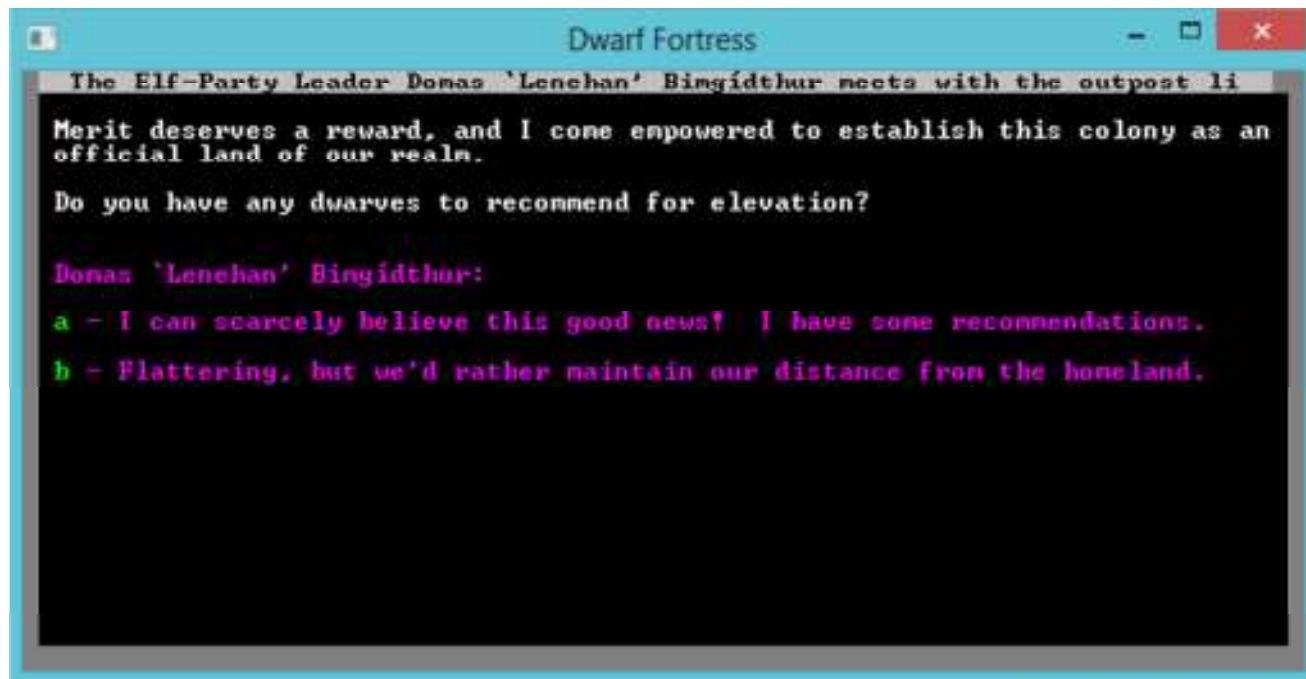
**7th Opal, 254**

The second-to-last ventilation shaft has been completed. The day of Reckoning is near, and it is too late for anyone to stop it. Even if Modi and Jackal were alive, they would not have been able to unravel the genius behind my operation. Their minds were too Dwarven.



9th Opal, 254

The liaison came to my office today, claiming that he was almost done with his inspection. He then revealed to me some surprising news; apparently the Queen wished to formally recognize this prison as a section of her domain. As such, he wished for a recommendation for a baron to rule over this prison.



I certainly had a recommendation in mind.



He then, as is customary, asked me what I wished to have in the next caravan. I simply responded with lye, and other similar products. I figured that it was time to start our soap-making industry, and I think Moisturizer needs to be appeased before he snaps.

The liaison then told me the capital's basic wants and bid me farewell. He has acted foolishly, for he has cloaked me in an even greater power than I already possessed.



Asmoth's Journal, Entry 8

Asmoth's Log, 9th of Opal, 254

Lenehan has been stricken by a terrible disease; barony. I won't say he didn't deserve it for taking my vampire away before I could finish my tests (though I extracted enough samples to create a new one from any inmate I care to), but it is a terrible fate to befall any dwarf. From the two barons I've had the opportunity to work on in the past, loss of their possessions results in a quick spiral into insanity for the afflicted. This does provide me with an excellent opportunity to get rid of our new overlord should he attempt to interfere with my tests any further, though. I may see if Moisturiser has any taste for vandalism...

In any case, I never got around to finishing my tests on Lenehan's vial. What I did see concerned me though... I may need to find some way of preventing whatever it is he's planning. Again, Moisturiser may prove useful, as he expressed concern over the ventilation shafts being dug well before I knew what they were for. Then again... I have a dwarf unconscious on my table, and I have some vampire blood in a jar... perhaps I should simply take the easy way out? Dose the dwarf and lock him in Lenehan's room before he wakes up? No... too simple. Too easily traced. Too... crass. This seems to be a delicate game, and I am late to join it. My opening move must be subtle. I shall seek allies, not enemies, first. And then I will get my vampire back. Come, labcoat. There is work to be done.

23rd Opal, 254

The final vent is done, and my machine is almost ready for completion. After a thorough reworking, I believe that my new formula shall function in a better way than the original. There is only one way to find out, however, and I have no time for testing; such tasks were to be left for Asmoth, and he failed in that regard. On the Day of Reckoning, the formula will have its test.

7th Obsidian, 254

Today is the Day of Reckoning. Today, I change this fortress for the better, and all my hard work will have gone to good use. The strong will reap the rewards, and the weak shall all shrivel into dust. Nothing can stop this goal of mine now, for the vents and the machine are already in place. All I need to do is activate the machine, and a new era will begin. Bow to me, strong scions of the dwarves, for your time is now.

The Day of Reckoning: The Plot Thickens

The following accounts are fragmentary records of what transpired on the Day of Reckoning, which will doubtless live in infamy as the day dwarves remembered exactly why it is they hate elves so much.

Asmoth's Journal, Entry 9

Asmoth's Log, Date redacted.

I may have found my ally. Then again, he may be nothing but Lenehan's spy. I have yet to see him (must verify this is his true gender. All visual clues point towards this, but the unusual can be the downfall of many well laid plans. That and presumption. Presumption is an arsehole.) without his mask, but he tells me he already has a plan and will come to me should he require my assistance. If he does not, so much the better; my hands will be clean should an enquiry be the result of whatever this is.

I will admit that I am slightly wary of associating with someone as religious as this masked dwarf. Religion and my profession rarely mix well, but for the moment we have a common foe at least. He also doesn't appear to worship Armok or the lesser deities of our realm... I do not know if this is good or bad yet.

A spatter of blood marks the rest of the page

My apologies to the reader, should my log ever prove of interest to the scientific community. I had to attend to one of my more recent test subjects. On that note:

Test Three

Observations: Throughout our history, there has been no mention of an elf or goblin vampire. An obvious reason for this would be that as elves and goblins are functionally immortal anyway, the vampire curse would have no effect on them. Since the elves already consume intelligent beings, it's possible that there are in fact many elven vampires, and they are simply indistinguishable from normal elves.

Method: I simply used some of the blood I had extracted from the dwarven vampire that was briefly in my possession (and will be again, with any luck. Lenehan will give my prize back or suffer the consequences), injecting it into the bloodstream of one of my goblin 'volunteers'. I am currently unfortunately low on elf volunteers, but I shall persevere for!!SCIENCE!! I also implanted some flesh I took from my dwarven vampire into my second (and last, unfortunately) goblin volunteer. As a control experiment, I injected the same amount of vampire blood into a dwarf who was recently 'accidentally' declared dead. He revived a few hours after his family left, luckily for me.

Results: The dwarf reacted predictably, with the typical lengthening of the canines and thirst for blood. Unfortunately, I had to silence him instead, as these blasted air vents are channelling more noise than I would like around the fortress. The goblin to whom I gave a blood transfusion reacted... poorly. He seems to have gained far more strength than a dwarven or human vampire would, easily breaking the chains I had bound him to the table with. Luckily, instead of attacking me, he drained the still warm dwarf test subject of blood, then appeared to suffer a major allergic reaction and died before he could turn on me. The goblin I grafted the flesh into seems to have had a similar, though worse, reaction, virtually rotting in front of my eyes.

Thoughts: Perhaps vampirism is caused by some sort of symbiotic microorganism? Rather than a curse, it was intended as a gift, but the immune systems of the affected attack the organism, perhaps causing damage to the bloodstream, which then causes the new vampire to desire to drink it, both to replace the food it no longer requires and to minimise the trauma caused by adjusting to its new form. Then drinking the blood becomes a habit rather than a requirement, perhaps even an addiction. In the case of the goblins, I would guess that as they have no history of vampirism, their immune systems would react more violently towards the organism, resulting in their bodies self-destructing as I saw today. In any case, further study is clearly needed.

A dwarf sits on the rough stone floor, hands pressed firmly against the ground. Thoughts race through his head, but the mask that covers his face remains impassive. Today was the day he must strike. Lenehan had eliminated all of his rivals ruthlessly and swiftly, before he could react. But many of them, their souls belonged to the true gods. If the gods were willing, these souls could be used to strike back against Lenehan.

Darkness encompasses the room for a split second, and in that time there is an evil chuckle.

"Find your own way out, if you are so great. Prove your worthiness to serve."

Light floods back into the room, leaving the dwarf's usually impassive mask etched in a frown. That may be worry.

"Very well," he said, to nobody in particular, "I will do it myself."

With that, the dwarf stands up and exits the room, headed for where he knew the machine was located. This ended now.

On his way, he bumped into the doctor. Most dwarfs gave the masked dwarf a wide berth, but the doctor had finally approached him the previous month to discuss a possible common interest.

"Are you ready?" The doctor asked.

The masked dwarf only nodded, making his way to a destination known only to himself and his co-conspirators.

Part V: The Day of Reckoning (Wintertime Chapter II)

The events of 7th Obsidian, 254

Lenehan closed his journal, and threw it on his desk whilst hardly looking; he had more important things to attend to. He walked over to his machine, a bulky construction made of green glass, connected right to the main ventilation shaft of the prison. Taking his phial, he tentatively emptied the contents into the machine. He then walked over to a long pipe protruding out of the vent; it was small, though it was large enough for him to speak into. He knew that, in addition to allowing the gas to seep easily into his laboratory, the pipe could function as an intercommunication device, for the vents carried sounds to almost every corner of the fortress. After clearing his throat, he began to make his speech into the pipe.

"Denizens of Steelhold," he began, "I feel that the time has come to put an end to this fortress. We as a group have nothing more to gain from our current lifestyle. We will end up destroying ourselves if we allow this fortress and this society to continue as it does now. That is the reason why I shall do what I feel is necessary to save us as a group. Remember this, my subjects, as this day passes."

Lenehan stood up and began to walk toward the lever in the center of his laboratory. Throughout the fortress, fear and hate spread across the expressions of the dwarves, for they knew that their baron was going to attempt something radical. Taking the lever in a firm grip with both hands, Lenehan pushed it into its activated position. As the glass machine began to churn and whistle, Lenehan took his wooden bow and, with a great swing, smashed it against the lever, bending it out of shape. The machine began to fill Lenehan's laboratory, as well as the cell-blocks, the dining room, the hospital, the stairwell, and even the caverns with a faint-red mist. Coughing once or twice from the inhalation, Lenehan took the intercommunication pipe once again.

"This mist was created, in part, from the genetic remains of murdered Elven merchants. This alchemical mixture will cause these genes to enter your own

bloodstream through your lungs and your skin. Those of you, the worthy, whose genes are most similar to those of the elves will find themselves adopting similar traits as them. You will grow tall, live forever, and your ears shall grow to a point. The rest of you, the unworthy scum of this fortress, will suffer severely from this mist. It will act like poison to you, and this prison will be littered with the corpses of all the rejected by the end of the month. The mist is imperfect, and the effects may take weeks to be fulfilled. Once this is all over, however, those of you who survive will thank me."

All about Steelhold, the inmates heard the loud sound of Lenehan covering his intercom. Every dwarf in the prison was coughing, each one's lungs felt as if they were on fire. Some of the inmates covered their eyes and skin with thick cloth, for the mist was skinning them terribly. Within his own laboratory, Lenehan waited calmly and patiently in his seat. The mist was very thick in the small room, and he knew that it would grow only thicker, as the exits to the fortress had been sealed the previous day. The mists stung him, and were painful to inhale, but Lenehan accepted them with incredible willpower; these mists would make him elf-like at last.

His thoughts then turned to his enemies. He knew that there would be rebellion amongst the inferior dwarves. He remembered Dr. Asmoth, whom he knew was a madman. He remembered the mysterious masked dwarf, who had threatened him several times. He remembered the soap-making creature, and how he denied him work. Certainly none of these dwarves had the necessary genes to adopt Elven qualities, and each of them had the will to resist. Asmoth was the one he feared the most, due to his intelligence. Lenehan, however, would not hide like a coward in the face of his enemies.

He hobbled over to the intercom once more, and, forcing his voice through the thick mist, screamed a warning to the doctor.

"Asmoth!" he choked, "if you want to kill me, Asmoth, follow the passageway in my cell to my laboratory. There you'll find me."

Lenehan couldn't speak anymore, the mist was too thick. Running on sheer willpower at this point, he boldly marched to a smaller lever on the wall and pulled it, lowering the protective grate shielding him from the rest of the prison. Stepping once more in front of his machine, he took out his bow and nocked an iron-tipped arrow. He was ready for whatever would come through that passage.



(Picture by Adventurer: Lenehan in his moment of triumph)

Peering into the Criminal Mind: Musings of one "Rhaken", incarcerated at penal colony Steelhold

7th Obsidian, 254

That crazy elf-humper Lenehan has gone too damned far. I'm glad I stole a spare cloak and blankets from the storeroom - a few cuts here and there, and I have a facemask to protect me from this gas. Won't risk exposing my skin either.

Lenehan must be stopped. I'm sure I'm not the only one who believes that. I've made myself a handful of allies over the past couple of months. Time to round them up and invade the baron's office. I'm taking my shiv, just to make sure.

Part VI: Reunion (Wintertime Chapter III)

The events of 7th Obsidian, 254

As Lenehan waited intently in his study, and as the inmates of Steelhold drank to the end of the world in despair, Maskdwarf waited patiently whilst Dr. Asmoth worked intently on the corpse. Because of the vent connected directly to Asmoth's office, the two of them were forced to move their operations into another room, one where the mist was thin; the room of choice was Modi's tomb. Asmoth worked with the corpse, sewing it together with new flesh and organs "donated" by generous other dwarves. Maskdwarf had already carved onto the tomb a circle inscribed with arcane and headache-inducing symbols of which Asmoth couldn't even begin to guess the meaning.

"Well?" asked the masked dwarf; Asmoth shrugged in response.

"This is far beyond anything I've ever studied," the doctor replied, "The new organs are certainly closer to functioning than the old ones, but the fact is that this is nothing more than a corpse. Even if you do find some way to restart the heart and brain, there's severe damage. And even success would be seen as an abomination."

"It matters not," the masked dwarf retorted with supreme confidence, "The hatred is enough to keep the vessel alive, at least long enough to do its duty. The sacrifice pays for life. Death for death, blood for blood."

"Then I've done all I can," Asmoth sighed. He could hear sobs coming from the dining hall; husbands cried for their wives, children cried for their mothers, and those dwarves without family simply cried. Even the cold, mechanical doctor felt sympathy for his fellow dwarf at that moment.

"There is still more to be done, and you must perform the ritual," the mask seemed to grin in the half light.

Asmoth looked at his partner in confusion, but the dwarf's meaning became clear when the sacrifice was pushed into the center of the circle. He was a simple pickpocket, one of several in the prison, and he would not be missed. Maskdwarf held out a shining dirk and handed it to Asmoth. The doctor examined the blade in his palm, and glanced tentatively at their prisoner. For a moment he turned away, shaking his head as he looked down at his chest. But as the prisoner began babbling thanks through his gag, the doctor whirled around and plunged the blade straight into the prisoner's throat. Warm red blood bubbled from the wound and into the circle, which began to glow in a terrible light, emitting a color thought impossible by the doctor until that moment. The entire prison began to rumble, blocks of rock crumbled from the ceiling and the stone alter began to crack. A horrible daemonic chortle could be heard, echoing faintly from deep within the earth. It was then that Modi's corpse began to move once more.

"Lenehan, you bastard! Jackal!" she screamed, before blinking in shock and confusion.

"I think she's reliving her last memories," Asmoth mused. "Fascinating, perhaps this could use some testing -"

"This is a holy rite, doctor, and you shall not pervert it for the travesty you call 'science!'" the masked dwarf growled, "The elf lover is attempting to infect the entire fortress with elf tissue, which will either transform these dwarves into abominations or kill them. Personally, I would gladly kill you both and be done with it, but it appears the gods have a use for you. Lenehan is using the same twisted art as you do to to this, so you must find some way to stop it."

"And you?" the doctor's reply was quiet, for his mind had already immersed itself in its masterful scientific calculation.

"Myself and Modi shall teach Lenehan a lesson. The gods shall protect us."

Asmoth snorted, grabbed one of the torches that had illuminated their ceremony and vanished in a swish of leather.

Lenehan stared intently at the entrance to his study. Although the machine had already created all of the mist that it was capable of, it still served to circulate it all about the fortress, and Lenehan could not see anything farther away from him than his doorway. He twitched slightly as he heard sounds coming closer towards him. It sounded, at first, as if two dwarves were running down the hall, but he soon heard only the steps of one. Drawing back his bowstring as far as it could go, he aimed it right at the entryway.

"Show yourself!" he shouted into the red mist. He was taken aback, however, by the figure that stood before him, for it was the very figure of his old foe whom he had sentenced to death. "Modi!" he managed to choke out.

"Miss me, elf-lover?" was the dwarf's only response.

Part VII: Sic Semper Tyrannis (Wintertime Chapter IV)

The events of 7th Obsidian, 254



She advanced slowly into the chamber, wielding two weapons in her hands. Lenehan could not believe the sight of the partially decayed creature that stood before him. Parts of her skin and joints were replaced with parts belonging to other dwarves, and these new parts did not completely match her body. Her hair, which she kept in clean braids during her life, was now a wavy, disheveled mess. She seemed to glow with a sort of aura, an aura that struck fear into the hearts of all who beheld her.

Lenehan stared at this apparition for seven seconds before he could react. He quickly drew back his bowstring once more and let loose an arrow at Modi's chest. The arrow hit its mark exactly, and pierced straight into his foe. Lenehan's satisfaction was, however, cut short when Modi effortlessly pulled the arrow from the wound, dropped it on the ground, and continued to proceed towards her target. Although the arrow and its removal seemed to hurt her slightly, the pain was no greater than if she was stung by a bee. Lenehan gasped as he saw the blood that oozed from her open wound; the blood was that of a dwarf, but rather a viscous black substance that sizzled as it dropped onto the stone floor.

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Asmoth ran into the dining hall, where the choking dwarves were each saying their prayers to their personal gods. He forcefully pushed several family-altars off of the long table in the center of the room and leapt atop it.

"Listen up everyone!" he shouted with such power that everyone stopped to listen, "If you want to survive, you'll need to get away from the mist. Follow me and I'll save you!"

The desperate dwarves let out cries of joy, for the mad doctor, to them, seemed to be a angel-divine, sent by the gods to save them. They were lead down the staircase into the deep recesses of the earth. Although vents had been installed in the caverns, the caves were open enough that the mist concentration was quite thin, and the dwarves could breathe easy once again.

A small group of dwarves, each clad in thick cloth cloaks with wrappings draping from their faces approached Asmoth. The doctor recognized their leader as Rhaken, the infamous outlaw and newcomer to the prison. The bandit wished to stage a raid of Lenehan's office in order to exact proper vengeance for what their baron had done.

"That is already being taken care of," responded Asmoth, "The current issue of moment is combating this mist and the infection it has caused in many of the dwarves. If you truly want to help, use that shiv of yours and defend the women and children from the troglodytes."

Asmoth then grabbed seven able-bodied dwarves, including the soap-making creature known as Moisturizer, and began to ascend the stairway once more. As he walked up the stairs, he began to notice that the mist did not react well to the torch that he was carrying with him. Upon contact with the flame, the mist seemed to disintigrate. Asmoth's brilliant mind immediately concocted a plan to rid the fortress of the mists.

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Lenehan took several steps back away from Modi and began to fire more arrows at the resurrected dwarf. These Modi easily dodged or, in one case, cleaved vertically in half with her axe. It wasn't long before Lenehan realized, to his horror, that he had run his quiver out of arrows. Modi noticed this as well, and immediately charged towards the helpless dwarf, her axe raised over her head. Lenehan just barely dodged her by diving out of her way, and Modi's axe smashed into the glass machine, causing it to become stuck for several seconds.

When she finally retrieved her weapon, Modi's attention was turned towards the damaged lever in the center of the chamber. She advanced towards it and set down her weapon. Taking the bent lever in both arms, she began to pull on it with all of her might. From the corner of the room, Lenehan could see that the daemonic aura that surrounded her seemed to grow more intense as she strained against the twisted metal. With a forceful groan, the lever began to shift back into position, and Modi immediately forced it into its deactivated position. Lenehan's machine began to slow to a halt, and the mist stopped circulating through the chamber.

As Modi bent down to pick up her weapons, Lenehan sensed that his chance had come. He grabbed a glass flask from the top of his desk and tossed its contents all over Modi. The liquid burned Modi's skin, and she felt true pain for the first time in her second life.

"The doctor was correct in his notes," yelled Lenehan, "The concentration was too high for the first formula."

Modi struggled to her feet, weakly holding her weapons in her palms. Lenehan had his old crossbow in his hands, and an elf-bone quarrel aimed right at Modi's throat.

"Won't this be an ironic death for you? Slain by the bones of those whom you so abhorred."

Modi dropped her weapons, "Curse you Lenehan!"

With a surprising force, Modi rushed towards Lenehan once again. Unprepared this time, Lenehan could only fire his crossbow at his target and, although the quarrel pierced the target's throat and continued right through, she was completely unphased. Modi's fist struck Lenehan in the lower body at full force, and the baron was sent flying across to room to crash against his machine. Pain wracked his body, and he weakly looked up at the advancing figure.

"This is for Jackal," she muttered aloud.

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Asmoth's small group stood before him, clutching their barrels of tallow and oil. The more unfortunate had been forced to participate in one of the greatest of dwarven crimes: booze burning.

"The plan is simple," Asmoth said. "Moisturizer shall take three dwarves into the ventilation shafts and spread as much fuel as possible into the system. My three will be in the hallways, linking up the shafts and leading the fuel to the bonfire. Everyone got it?"

Not a dwarf questioned his plan, each went about spreading the oil and the alcohol about the shafts and the hallways, leading it to the great pile of spare furniture, logs, and alcohol barrels in the middle of the main cell-block. When they had finished their work, Asmoth ordered his followers to return to the caverns. After waiting forty seconds, Asmoth turned and threw his torch into the hall. There was a thunderous roar as the flames broke out. Asmoth's swear was lost in the noise as a spark followed the lines of oil into the hall, overtaking him easily and rushing into the shafts Lenehan had dug. The doctor fled the site in desperation.

Fire had become Steelhold's new master. It roared through the cell-block, devouring the taint Lenehan had released. It followed roads of tallow and oil through the shafts, leaving only burnt stone in its wake. Deep in the caverns bellow, prisoners and former guards alike huddled in around small fires, Rhaken's group keeping watch and attending to those burnt by the mist. A silhouette appeared in the smoke and the doctor emerged, covered in ash from head to foot.

"Labcoat dwarf!" cried Moisturizer, "Where's your labcoat?"

"I need a new one," Asmoth said sadly. "It got burned." He scanned the crown, but couldn't see the masked dwarf anywhere.

He was probably still inside. Asmoth could only hope the fire would get him; it would make everything so much easier.

"Excellent work Modi, but the fun is over."

Modi turned around upon hearing these echoing words. She saw the shape of Maskdwarf standing in the center of the room, grasping an obsidian short sword in his hand.

"Now is the time that I can avenge Jackal," said Modi, "You cannot stop me."

The masked dwarf raised his sword and sliced it downwards, and Modi, although standing far outside of the sword's range,

cried in pain, as if she had been bisected. He could sense her soul fighting back, but she had always been a physical fighter rather than a mental one. His power was absolute, and soon the abomination slumped to the floor, devoid of life.

Lenehan struggled to his feet, looking at the masked dwarf with surprise.

"You were on my side this whole time?" he asked.

Moving with impossible speed, the masked dwarf rushed forward and grabbed Lenehan by the head.

"You think I saved you from death? Your heresy has earned you a fate far worse. When I'm done, you will wish I had let Modi kill you."

Placing three fingers to Lenehan's forehead, he intoned: "For your crimes and heresies against the true gods, I curse you to behold their greatness for the rest of your existence.

Lenehan's eyes opened wide, and they quickly began to dart about the room. Everywhere he looked, he could see the faint visages and silhouettes of horrible daemonic creatures. They began to start towards him, muttering in arcane and forgotten tongues. Lenehan screamed once, then slumped, unconscious.

...the next thing Modi was aware of was that she was no longer in her new body. She let out a blood chortling screech that made the dead stir... Provided they heard her. Sarrak stood watching but said nothing. Modi raged and thrashed about, screaming about her loss of revenge, having it stolen by that masked bastard. after her tantrum, she dropped to her knees and wept. She wept not for her vengeance or her death or the loss of her second body, but for Jackal. She could've been left to rot and Jackal could've been returned, but instead they chose her. The return of a guard? That was blasphemy to the convicts... But if he did return, he would've made everything back to order.

It was then she felt a hand on her ghostly shoulder and heard something call her name. She looked up and saw Jackal smiling.

"Modi dear, you have much to do still. Perhaps I will aid you, or even return myself, but not now... Come, let us watch the end of the elf lover's reign." And the two of them walked towards the body of Lenehan, the Elf Lover, hand in hand.

And Modi, for once in a very, very long time, felt no anger or hate; just happiness...

Somewhere down in the caverns below Steelhold...

"Keep it down, damn you!" A cloaked dwarf hisses at a woman, covering her mouth. She had been whining about her child, oh where was her poor child, had they seen her?

"She's probably with one of the other groups," Rhaken whispered. "Don't fuss about it. Just keep quiet and don't move."

"But-"

"Shut it."

"But my child-"

"Shut your fucking face, woman!"

Her eyes flared with the anger of the ignorant, but at least she was quiet now. Typical. Here they all were, trying to save her life, and she was risking getting them all killed.

Rhaken's men weren't exactly elite operatives, nor had they been able to properly prepare, but they did well enough. Firewood had been quickly gathered from cavern trees and pitched into small campfires, forming a small perimeter on an underground hill carpeted in fungus. They had followed their leader's instructions to the letter, having a dwarf set up watch between each pair of fires so the glare of the flames wouldn't impede their sight. The few not on watch duty were keeping the civilians in line. One sat by a fire, a brace of long, slender saplings by his side, a pilfered knife in one hand. One by one, he sharpened the tips of the shafts and held them over the blaze to harden. Makeshift spears. Complete crap if their foes came armored, but troglodytes had yet to learn the fundaments of tool-making. They just had their own leathery hides.

Some time went by in relative quiet. Just the crackling of the fires and the unsteady roil of cavern noises - a drip from a stalagmite high above, and endless, indistinct echoes from far away. If you were paranoid enough, you could make those echoes out to be anything. They could be cave spiders scuttling about. They could be the mating calls of crundles. Or they could be the cry of something else - some ancient creature, forgotten by dwarf and man and elf, fast approaching to claim their lives. Best not to think about it too much.

A sudden noise. The pattering of footsteps, coming from somewhere to Rhaken's left. From the fortress stairwell?

"Dwarf, I think," said one of his boys, an old army tracker and poacher. How he could tell, Rhaken would never know. He just wished the bastard had been quieter with the footfalls.

Sure enough, a dwarf was approaching. Some dumb civilian, who'd been holed up in the fortress, no doubt. Didn't seem particularly burned. He had probably huddled somewhere safe, like the garbage heap.

"I think it's clear, guys! The fires are going out and I think the baron's been dealt with!" The dwarf was a bit too happy about all this. A bit too loud, too.

Rhaken's boys gestured wildly to the other dwarf, trying to see if they could convey the message of "quiet, you fucking imbecile" before something heard him-

"Head's up! We got movement!" One of the perimeter guards, three fires away from Rhaken.

"How many?", demanded the boss.

"Three of 'em. Shit, it's trogs!"

Rhaken cursed under his breath. "Spears, boys! Look alive! Protect the civilians!" He ran to pick up a spear himself. Here's hoping they did the trick.

His boys, as well as any other former military among them, ran for the pile of spears. They formed up as best they could, forming a shabby spearwall that would make any drill sargeant throw a fit. Still better than nothing. Rhaken's remaining men went around the civilians, trying to cover them should any trogs get past the front line.

The brutish creatures were running toward them, foaming at the mouth, massive fists swinging wildly. Their wild eyes blazed. They were hungry, and keen to feast on delicious bearding. Not on my watch, Rhaken thought.

The first came barreling into the line. Too dumb to protect itself, it managed to ram three spears several inches deep into its chest. One seemed to have hit its heart, because the beast started to topple backwards, breaking the spears and taking the tips with it.

The second came. It grabbed the spear of the dwarf to Rhaken's right and swung it aside, throwing it and its wielder over and into the rest of the men. Rhaken was smart enough to duck it and thrust the spear into the creature's knee. It roared in pain and twisted, snapping off the tip. Rhaken cursed. Fortunately, his boys saw the opening and started stabbing the creature wherever they could. One got lucky and hit the windpipe, and the second troglodyte fell as well, lying beside its friend with a broken spear jutting out of its throat.

They didn't have time to reset the formation. The third of them came barreling in, throwing aside the feeble spears with a swing of its arms. Rhaken had discarded his spear shaft and taken up his shiv, but he could never get close enough without being pounded into beard pudding.

Ah, fuck it.

Rhaken threw the shiv.

It was a stupid idea. The thing wasn't properly balanced. nor was it particularly sharp. He'd be lucky if it even hit, much less did anything. A desperate effort. Foolish, even. And now he was completely unarmed, just like most of his men, and facing a creature several times their si-

Wait. He nailed it in the eye. It ran off screaming.

"Nice shot, boss!"

"Thanks," he replied. There goes a perfectly good shiv.

Rhaken advanced on the newcomer, calm as a cavy. Then he grabbed the blundering idiot by the collar and headbutted him in the nose.

"If you hadn't done this in ignorance, I'd tear off your beard with my bare damned hands and feed it to you," he seethed at the dwarf, now bleeding on the floor. "Take us up. And keep the fuck quiet, or I'll feed you to the trogs."

Rhaken's men started stamping out the fires and rounding up the civvies. Once back in the fort, they'd probably take it upon themselves to put out the remaining fires and coordinate the cleanup effort. As for himself, he was heading straight for the baron's quarters, hoping to find either the doctor or that psycho with the mask.

Rhaken sighed. He needed a drink. And a new shiv.

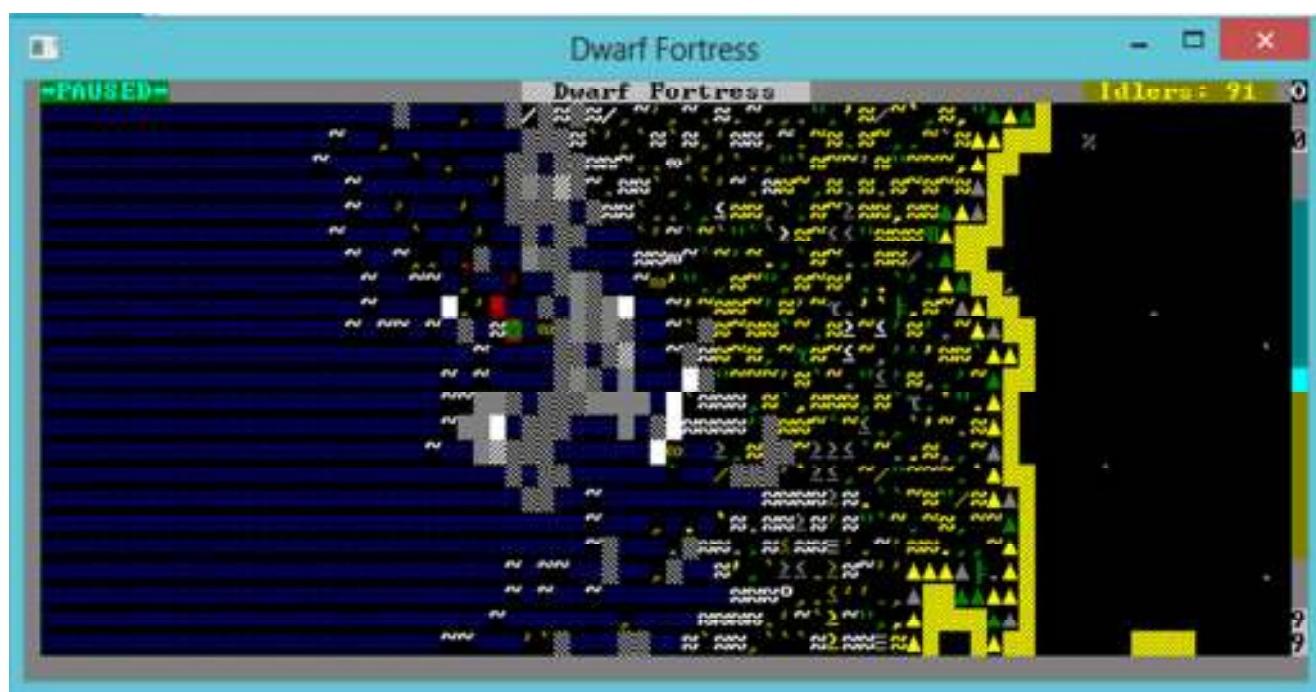
From the shadows, the masked dwarf watched the warriors eliminate the troglodytes with relative ease. If this incident had proved anything, he reflected, it proved that dwarfs had indomitable spirits. They would never bow to any other species. It was incredible what fear drove dwarfs to do. Fortunately, he had a hold on the dwarven leader, which would prove invaluable in the conversion of this fortress.

The dwarfs started filing up the stairs, but the masked dwarf wasn't going yet. There were things to do... Plans to make...

Part VIII: Epilogue

Events of 28th Obsidian, 254

The former baron stood still, bleeding out in the sand. His body lay sprawled in the shallow water of the beach. When the dwarves found him, he was cold, pale, and motionless. Lenehan was dead.



The official story, according to the former baroness consort and her children, was that the baron set off on a hunting trip and died in combat against a giant tick. Moisturizer and Asmoth could hazard a guess as to what the truth was, but only Maskdwarf knew for sure. Lenehan had committed assisted suicide by a wild animal. The only clues that his wife could find as to her husband's strange behavior were scratchy drawings on his desk. Each one portrayed an ordinary scene, such as a sleeping dwarf, dwarves at a meal, or a wedding. Each drawing also contained a daemon, in plain sight, yet unnoticed by the dwarves. These daemons did horrible things out of the sight of the other dwarves; the daemons slaughtered animals, whispered terrible thoughts into other dwarves, groped the females, and committed many other sorts of unspeakable acts.

Within the first week, Lenehan's desk was found to be completely empty, raided by an intruder. Although rumors spread, no one knew the true culprit of the crime, and it is likely that no one ever truly will.

Asmoth looked tentatively at the empty phial in his hands, and at the thorough notes "bequeathed" to him by Lenehan. He had already managed to use his research on the vampire virus to cure the denizens of Steelhold, and the time had come to resume his studies. Perhaps research of Lenehan's formulae and substances could be beneficial to him.

(OOC: I must say, playing in this fortress and writing as Lenehan was a really fun experience. I actually didn't intend for him to die, he just ran outside, walked over to the shoreline near his tomb, and proceeded to fight his hopeless fight; perhaps he really did want to die. Nevertheless, good luck to the next player.

NOTE: We have no military now.)

Asmoth's Log, 29th of Obsidian, 254

Lenehan is... no, the story is well known enough by now. No need to record it here. Instead, I shall let this be known: the man was a genius. Depraved, perhaps. Mad, certainly. But a genius nonetheless. To think I believed his compound was a poison when I first saw it! His chosen species was clearly misguided, though. Why settle for elven immortality when we can have that and more? Dragonfire, the wings of a roc, the hydra's healing... the possibilities are endless. Lenehan's research shall be our salvation, though he did not know it.

Onto my other project. I've so far been unable to replicate the masked dwarf's resurrection circle. I have conducted three ceremonies so far, each conducted by as close to the average dwarf as I've been able to find. Of the performers, only one survived, and she appears to have been driven mad by the experience, screaming about the Truth until I put her down. None of the targets revived, so I must have missed some vital component, either of the circle or of the ritual itself. I shall persevere. I was blind before. What do the differences between elves and goblins mean, when I shall soon be able to break the barriers between life and death?

Lenehan was dead. This was... Unfortunate. Perhaps he had resisted the gods influence enough to cause his death. He would likely never know, the masked dwarf reflected. Binding souls was tricky business, and many things could go wrong. Nonetheless, he was still the prophet. These dwarfs would see the light. It didn't matter how long it took, time was no constraint for him. First, however, he had a task to attend to. Lenehan may have left evidence against him, which would have to be removed as soon as possible. As he skulked the corridors, he pondered his next step. He had stayed out of sight of the other dwarfs since the incident, better that they think him dead. The incident had proven the value of biding ones time, waiting for the opportune moment to strike. Or, in his case, to teach.

Having searched Lenehan's quarters, the masked dwarf put a hand to the wall. Shadows coalesced around him, and he was gone, leaving only the smell of brimstone behind.

In the weeks that followed, rumors flew about the fortress. While few had met the masked dwarf in person, many had heard of him, and the sudden cessation of sightings caused rumors to fly. Some said he had died in the fire, others said that he had fled into the caverns. A few proposed that Lenehan had been the masked dwarf. However, dark whispers persisted that the masked dwarf was still alive, watching them, unseen. Nobody knew the truth, or if they did, they weren't saying.

Asmoth's Journal, Entry 9

The preceding pages are a mass of vicious slashes and rips, covering up several variations on a circular design and a list of ingredients

Asmoth's Log, 30th of Obsidian, 254.

I cannot sleep. The circle seems to be burned onto the interior of my eyelids, and I cannot rest until I have gotten it correct. The design I think I nearly have correct, but the ingredients... I just don't know. I wasn't paying attention, too caught up in my meaningless discoveries. There is whispering as well, but I know what happens to dwarves who listen to whispers. They end up on an operating table with no lungs, just so someone can see what happens next. Or in this case, they end up as soulless wretches, doomed to walk the night. There were definitely torches. Six of them, at each of the points of the hexagon inside the circle. There was something under three of the torches as well, but I cannot recall what. The corpse. The sacrifice. What else? I do not know! This isn't the sort of thing I can even subject to testing, I've seen for myself what happens to those who get it wrong, and I am too valuable to lose to such a thing.

~~Water, carbon, ammonia, lime. Phosphorus, salt, niter, sulphur. Flourine, iron, silicon. Traces of various others. Can they be substituted for the corpse, or is there something special about the dead body itself? It would certainly be more convenient to bring them back in a fully functioning vessel, but perhaps the corpse calls its own soul to it?~~

I DO NOT KNOW. I need to sleep, but I cannot. Should I listen to the voices? Of course not! But tempting... so tempting. Why is it so difficult? If the whisperers want me to finish the circle, why do they make it so hard for me to concentrate? I... I just want him back. He understood why I do what I do. It's not as if I won't aid the fortress as well, I'll bring everyone back! Everyone! They'll know I did good. They won't hate me any more.

A large scrawl crosses out all that is written on the next page. The handwriting that can be seen is a very different style to that which comes before and after it.

I think I understand now. The dark gods try to take all who see their arts. They shall not take me easily. I shall fight them. I'm leaving this journal where someone will hopefully stumble across it. I doubt I will survive this experience, but if I do I'm going to hang that masked dwarf with his own intestines. Scratch that, it was immature of me. Never waste a good test subject. I have no doubt I will keep that masked bastard alive for as long as I can.

Interlude 4

Bees, Journal 1

This is a superior quality yak leather journal. It is encircled with rings of dolomite and menaces with spikes of mahogany. It is caked brown with old, dried blood, and has had its first few pages roughly ripped out.

...but I told him that no matter what his old squad leader said maces were the better weapons and that was that. I hope he sees the error in his ways, journal.

15 Slate

That bright hunter lad got down some sort of bird today and we ate well. I wonder what he did to get on the Queen's bad side... well, no matter; he'll have a chance at a clean slate at Steelhold.

Blackstone still isn't talking to me because of that silly hammer - mace business.

16 Slate

Clear weather on the trail today. We're making good time, and the prisoners are being reasonable.

17 Slate

I saw the darnedest thing today, journal. As we settled down to make camp someone accidentally stepped on a beehive, and half the caravan started screaming and shouting- but then, that scarred boy who never talks walked over and started making this quiet humming noise. The swarm of bees just... settled on him, nestled up, and on his face was the purest expression of joy I've ever seen on a dwarf.

I told him to stop that nonsense, of course, and swatted the bees on his arms- we had to make camp- but still, I've never witnessed anything like it. I hope I didn't put him out too much... maybe I'm just too soft to be a prison gua

[There is a smear of blood]

bees

beesbeesbeesbeesbeesbeesbeesbees...

This is blood-covered ghostly journal of Sarrak the Ghostly Butcher

Well... Seems like everything worked quite well... Although it is a bit sad that I forgot to eat during ritual and have starved my body to death, it is unimportant now. Hm...

pages with ritual description look battered

Quite simple. Get sixty eight freshly murdered squirrels or their equivalent (I used old rat skulls and some hamster skeletons - perhaps, not really adequate substitute), rip their eyes with your fingers (already gone, sadly), scribe octagonal spyral on the rock surface and destoy after memorizing. Then put materials in the proper places, awash them with blood (used a barrel of jaguar, brought in by human sadist comrades), chat some maddening mantras for an eternity and wait three months or for a year and a half in limbo if your letargic body was properly buried... Letargic, yeah. Already a bare sceleton, devoid of flesh. Well, anyway, the result isn't up to my standarts. I barely manage to interact with physical world. No butchering fluffies for me for some time...

By the way, why on earth I even tried to complete this madness?.. Last months before my death are somewhat unclear. Something to do with the closed door, perhaps... I tried to open it - to no avail... Strange, strange indeed.

Yeah, it is impossible to destroy this...book-thing. I can tear the pages as much as I want, but to no success. Interesting... Oh, and it is infinite! No searching for spares, lucky me. Don't know if I could find something to write in if this ghostly book ends.

page is soaked with blood, ghostly letters are barely visible through it

Hail to the Jackal Thronesteel the Wheel of Violators!

the is a picture of a mass-burial crypt

What a disgrace - to lie in such crowded conditions! Modi, we were friends! And you even took the power in my absence! You could have provided my mortal form with a better sarcophagus at least... Oh, yeah, it seems like you died recently, alongside the Warden. When you will get here - we will have to talk... Or maybe you won't come? Interesting thought.

By the way, fortress looks great. Er...prison looks. Yeah. There is one dwarf that I'm proud of. May the bloody science not be forgotten with my death. Go for it, Asmoth!

And then Gnorm Wrote a Song:

The Autumn part will be up before long, but for now, I decided to write some lyrics in honor of the previous dwarf overseer-character: "Modi." I figured it was the least I could do, considering I - sort of - killed her. Also, any good succession fortress has some sort of fan-song to it. The song is based on "Johnny Reb" by Johnny Horton, and it carries the same tune.

"(You Fought All the Way) Modi Dear"

You fought all the way Modi dear, Modi dear,

You fought all the way Modi dear

Saw you marchin' through the desert and sand,

You helped your dearest swain to build a mighty prison grand,

You fought for your kin, and your death shan't be for nought,

Of your final sacrifice the dwarves have not forgot

'Cause you fought all the way Modi dear, Modi dear,

You fought all the way Modi dear

I saw your squad captured by the Elvenkind,

Saw the gruesome images that messed up your mind,

Saw your comrades being flayed against the wall,

There was hate in your eyes and you would avenge them all

For you fought all the way Modi dear, Modi dear,

You fought all the way Modi dear

I saw Commander J. raise his mace against Atu,

*Saw your one true love fightin' right beside you,
You fought with your army and the goblin forces fell,
And their human boss Atu is now on his way to Hell*

*'Cause you fought all the way Modi dear, Modi dear,
You fought all the way Modi dear*

*When Steelhold learnt the result of the attack,
All the dwarves dressed from head to toe in black,
And honored you who had fallen in combat,
Even Lenehan lightly tipped his hat*

*'Cause you fought all the way Modi dear, Modi dear,
You fought all the way Modi dear*

*You fought all the way Modi dear, Modi dear,
You fought all the way Modi dear*

Moisturizer's Journal, Entry 3

Undated Entry. The writing is pressed deep into the paper, and the handwriting is worse than the other entries in this journal.

No.

No!

NO!

NO!!

Elf-lover's dead but now we have a new problem on our hand, guys.

Guys.

Guys.

Listen guys.

Guys listen, Labcoat-dwarf guys.

Guys, Labcoat-dwarf, guys.

She's trying to bring THEM back.

They're the ones who made me like this. They made me kill my friends all those years ago. Now they'll make Asmoth kill us all, too. she'll go into the Pit next, and he'll end up just like me. She'll be Cursed.

I've seen the ceremony she's trying to do. It's awful, guys, I recognize it so well. They showed it to me too...I know exactly what she's been doing wrong. I need to stop her, I need to stop him...

Stop her...but how?

I don't want to kill her too. She's my friend. I don't want to kill any of my friends ever again.

Oh, guys, what do I do?

Lenehan in the Afterlife

Lenehan awoke in a large, dark cave. The ground was rough and rugged, and the entire room smelt slightly of blood. Lenehan could not see a thing, for he was in total darkness. Suddenly, a ray of light was cast upon him from the heavens above, and Lenehan heard a thundering voice call his name.

"Rise Lenehan!" the voice shouted.

Lenehan was startled by the voice, and complied immediately. Now that he was in the light, he noticed that he was clothed in a long black toga, similar to those worn by certain tribes of humans. As he looked up in front of him, more light began to flood into the room. He now saw that he was standing before a mighty throne, crafted of pure adamantine, thousands of miles high, long, and wide. Seated on this grandiose throne was a glowing figure dressed in an impenetrable suit of armor. He was tall like a human, wide and bearded like a dwarf, and had ears like an elf. Lining the sides of this cave were two long rivers of boiling blood, which stretched into the distance behind Lenehan. Lenehan now knew that he was in the great hall of Armok, the creator and god of blood.

"Lenehan," Armok began, "You stand here before me to be judged for your actions during your life. You should know that you are accused with the indirect murder of Jackal and Modi, as well as a great crime against Dwarfiness. Do you have anything to say in your defense?"

"Great Armok," stammered the dwarf, "You know that I only did what I did out of love for my fellow dwarf. I only wished for them to know the greatness of our Elven companions."

"Silence fool!" roared the blood god, "Know you that I have damned dwarves for crimes far more venial than those of yours? In addition, the daemons in Hell have claimed your soul for themselves."

Lenehan began to shudder, for he feared that eternal damnation was imminent.

"However," continued Armok, "Your suicide dealt a blow, albeit a small one, to theemonic forces. The cults in the living world have been a thorn since creation, and any resistance against them I reward greatly!"

"So I will gain entry to Heaven?" asked Lenehan intently.

"Not quite! But I will allow you to work off your sins in the meantime. Gaze behind you."

Lenehan slowly turned to do so, and the infinitely long throne room was suddenly illuminated.

"Before you gain entry into Heaven, I would like every floor and wall section smoothed and engraved. If you get started now, you might be done before year 3450!"

Lenehan gazed in shock at the blood god, who in turn simply motioned for him to get started.

Also Gnorm drew Asmoth;



Journal of Magni, Entry 1

Diary of Magni:

Well, the Queen sent me on this blasted journey to this "Steelhold" where she said my sister was sent to after she was sent to prison. Well, I'm sent there as a reinforcement guard crew, but the other convicts they're sending don't know I'm a guard. I'm supposed to report to this "Jackal" who is the Warden. Supposudley, from rumors with the traders, he has a thing for my sister... Which is really strange if I'm going to be working with this guy. I know my sister had some problems after the Dwarf-Elf war, but getting the hots for the warden? Pathetic... It'll be nice to see my sister after so long, especially since last I saw her was just after the war. Hopefully time has managed to calm her down quite a bit.

The current events at Steelhold were that Jackal is in charge, the convicts seem happy, and everything seems to be working to her majesty's plans. I pray that this is true and not just a façade...

LATER:

It was... I come here expecting the guards to be manning the tower and keeping a hold on the convicts, but it turned out that the convicts hold the power here now... And the best part: the last convict in charge killed, not only Jackal, but my SISTER. And there were rumors that the doctor here resurrected her somehow, but there is no evidence of this. I've watched her experiments before, hauling some odd things there just to keep an eye on things, and I must say they're rather gruesome. She appears to be attempting to resurrect bodies... But he did this before I thought? Then there's that strange shadow I keep seeing every now and then of a masked dwarf. He doesn't notice I see him, but I do, and he kind of scares me. There's an odd air about him and something sinister. He's never there for long, and when he is, he's hiding in plain sight, blending in with others. The others keep to themselves, but one I feel bad for, which is Gob. He's a big guy and has arms the thickness of my hammer. And not the handle. He's not very bright and everyone openly insults him on it. He's a damn good fighter but really needs to learn to work for himself. I may talk a bit to him, he seems strong enough but others show me that I can have him help me have to return power to the guards.

Speaking of guards, the convicts have a small militia force and then one that was all crossbowmen and archers. The previous convict leader, Lenehan, seemed to have an obsession with elves and made that squad, led by himself. They say he tried to turn everyone into elves, but the mad dwarves tell me this. The others talk as if Lenehan never existed. Was he really that insane? I visit my sister's tomb regularly, and as ornate as it is, its kind of sad because the coffin appears to have been broken open and hastily put back together. I then spoke with the doctor after awhile and asked her about my sister, and she kind of shook her head muttering something about "recreating the process". When I asked her about Lenehan, she says her nephew was a brilliant mind but one that must've been put down. The doctor appears to be the maddest of the mad, but I doubt he'll cause much trouble to me. After all, during the next Caravan, I can send word to the queen about the status of the place. I can only hope I am not discovered in time... I will most likely keep this diary buried somewhere so no one may find out my plans. If you're reading this, you are either a fellow guard, a soldier come to liberate Steelhold; meaning I am slain. Or I am just re-reading my observations. I can only hope that I will live long enough through these events that Steelhold will return to the grace of her majesty... Though they swear that they are a Barony under her majesty's rule, they are a bunch of bandits, thieves and traitors... And unlike my sister who's rage fueled her justice, my hammer and my strength will help me return this to the justice system her majesty had intended this place to be...